

Nature Therapy

Developing a Framework for Practice

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NATURE THERAPY DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR PRACTICE

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requirements of the University of Abertay Dundee
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**I certify that this thesis is the true and accurate version of the thesis
approved by the examiners**

Signed



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This is to certify that all the work that appears in the doctoral dissertation
Nature Therapy Developing a Framework for Practice, is my own authentic
work.

The work has been edited and corrected as per the comments given by the
examiners.



Ronen Berger

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between human beings and nature has played an important role throughout history, as part of traditional medicine and curative rituals. The Shaman, the healing man, incorporated nature into rituals aiming to help both the individual and the community heal from misfortunes and make the transition from one life phase to another. However, the development of industry and urbanization put a distance between human beings and nature. The new healing methods that were constructed in the 20th century largely overlooked the relationship with nature, working mainly through cognition and verbal communication, relating to the relationship between people as the core element. In the last decade, along with the development of post-modernism, new therapeutic approaches emerged. Some of them, like the expressive-art therapies, seek to expand cognitive and verbal techniques to non-verbal and creative modes of working, emphasizing people's creativity and imagination abilities. Other approaches seek to expand the process by relating to 'the larger than self', inviting transpersonal and spiritual work to widen the person-to-person discourse. Ecopsychology invites people to expand their relationships beyond the 'person-to-person' relationship into one which will include nature. Despite its nature-oriented philosophy, however, Ecopsychology has not yet articulated into a therapeutic form, that specifies practical methods for therapeutic work. The present study aims to develop a therapeutic approach taking place in nature, using non-verbal and creative methods to extend common therapeutic practices in ways that can include a dialogue with nature. Using a reflexive Action Research strategy, the study examines the experience of both practitioners who used Nature Therapy in practice and who took part in training courses, and uses these data as a basis for the conceptualization and development of an innovative therapy theory. The implications of the study, for theory, research and practice in psychotherapy, are discussed.

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My heart is with you.

VOLUME 1

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Placing the Research in Context

The aim of this introductory Chapter is to highlight some of the key issues explored within the thesis, identify some over-arching research questions, and introduce the structure of the thesis.

The potential therapeutic aspects of contact with nature have been well documented by several writers (Abram, 1996; Berger, 2004; Beringer and Martin, 2003; Davis, 1998, 2004; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003). In recent years, the issue of human-versus-nature relationship has received greater recognition due to the negative effects that some aspects of technological developments have had upon various social and environmental processes (Roszak, 2001; Roszak et al., 1995; Totton, 2003). The two main areas of practice in which the therapeutic impact of contact with nature has been explored are *Ecopsychology*, and *Adventure Therapy*.

The developing field of Ecopsychology represents a social-therapeutic-environmental philosophy arguing that reconnection with nature is essential, not only for the maintenance of the physical world (habitats, animals, plants, landscape and cultures) but also for people's basic well-being (Roszak, 2001; Roszak et al., 1995; Totton, 2003). However, in the context of this Ph.D. thesis, it is important to state that even though Ecopsychology offers a fresh philosophy and political standpoint, it has not yet developed a practical therapeutic framework, nor has it generated research that has examined its impacts in therapy (Rust, 2005; Sevilla, 2006; Totton, 2003).

The growing field of Adventure Therapy reflects a different dimension of this aspect, as it uses the outdoors as a setting for educational and therapeutic work. As discussed in Chapter 3, Adventure Therapy seems to relate to nature only as a setting that provides the challenges and obstacles needed for the operation of this problem-solving and task-oriented approach (Beringer and Martin, 2003; Itin, 1998; Richards

and Smith, 2003). The attitude of Adventure Therapy towards nature has been receiving a growing amount of criticism. Both practitioners and researchers argue that this approach misses out on the spiritual and emotional benefits that the relationship with nature contains (Berger, 2003; Beringer, 2003; Beringer and Martin, 2003; Burns, 1998; Davis, 1998; Roszak et al., 1995). In addition, its theoretical basis has been criticised due to the lack of sufficient framework (Cason and Gillis, 1994; Hattie et al., 1997; Hovenlynck, 2003), on the claim that without academic and clinical development and validation through research, the ongoing debate regarding the issue of the field's professional boundaries (therapeutic or educational?) will not be solved (Hovenlynck, 2003; Itin, 2003; Peeters, 2003).

1.2 The Contribution and Aims of the Current Study

This Ph.D. seeks to develop an innovative theoretical framework that will add to the existing body of knowledge present in the fields of Adventure Therapy and Ecopsychology. As such, it will integrate elements from the aforementioned areas combining additional elements from Drama Therapy, the Narrative approach, Transpersonal Psychology and Gestalt as well as concepts found in anthropological literature.

The framework will include theory and methods relating to nature as a core reference point. It will add to Adventure Therapy's present framework, while extending its concrete and cognitive orientation to add creative, non-verbal and transpersonal dimensions. These concepts and framework can be used to develop more appropriate, productive, therapeutic interventions for people with verbal and/or cognitive difficulties and for those who would like to do therapy in experiential ways while keeping close contact with nature.

Last but not least, as the theoretical basis of the Ph.D. will include anthropological references, relating to the way in which Shamans used nature for healing rituals, the work will also add to the general debate about the place of spirituality within psychotherapy, adding specific knowledge about ways in which contact with nature can take part and assist such processes.

The researcher will make use of his pre-assumptions, based upon his previous experience as an ecologist and as a therapist. He will also use reflexive Action Research strategy and Grounded Theory analysis to further explore these assumptions, generate new concepts and frameworks, and to examine their impact upon varied populations and different settings.

1.3 The Development of Integrated Therapies

One of the key issues dominating the field of psychotherapy, for the past fifty years, has been the question of the theoretical basis of practice. Although a number of well-established approaches to therapy, such as psychoanalysis and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), have their own distinctive theoretical foundations and forms of practice, there are also a large number of other approaches which are 'integrative'; assembling ideas and techniques from other fields. The existence and popularity of the new movement towards integrationist theories is driven by a belief that established approaches to therapy are incomplete, and that more effective approaches could be developed by adding new elements to previous approaches (assimilative integration), or by creating new structures of theory and practice by welding together aspects of other approaches (McLeod, 2003a). In recent years, the integrationist movement in psychotherapy has begun to move beyond seeking merely to bring together concepts and techniques from within traditional psychology and psychotherapy. It had adopted ideas and practices from other domains. The process includes a development of a more holistic, mind-body-spirit and ritualistic framework, including elements such as forgiveness, mindfulness and contact with the 'larger than self' (Al-Krena, 1999; Davis, 1998; Rust, 2005; Jerome, 1993; Lahad, 2002; West, 2000, 2004). In addition, the cognitive discourse and its verbal mode are being expanded with the development of creative approaches that integrate concepts and methods from theatre, dance and art into the psychotherapeutic melee (Jennings, 1998; Lahad, 2002, Landy, 1996; Rubin, 1984). These developments, within the broader field of psychotherapy as a whole, provide a perspective from which it is possible to locate the focus of the present study, on the relevance of nature for psychotherapeutic practice, as an issue that has hardly been studied or developed. A review of current

debates revolving around the role of theoretical integration in psychotherapy can be found in Norcross and Goldfried (2005).

These concerns draw attention to the key question: what makes a set of ideas come to be regarded as 'theory'? One of the by-products of the attention to theoretical integration, manifested in the psychotherapy community, has been a consequent interest in the nature of psychotherapy's approach – what is it that is being integrated? It is widely accepted that all approaches to psychotherapy share a number of 'common therapeutic factors' such as the development of a supportive relationship, the opportunity to express emotion and the installation of hope. In addition to these common factors, the different elements of any specific psychotherapy approach have been summarised by McLeod (2003a: Chapter 3), who suggested that a psychotherapy approach must encompass the following features:

1. An organised and coherent set of concepts, comprising:
 - a. Underlying philosophical or 'meta-psychological' assumptions (for example, in psychoanalysis, the idea of the 'unconscious').
 - b. Theoretical propositions, predicting connections between observable events (i.e., in psychoanalysis, the posited causal association between certain childhood events and adult psychopathology).
 - c. Observational terms (i.e., in psychoanalysis, concepts such as 'transference' or 'denial').
2. A distinctive set of therapeutic procedures or interventions: i.e., systematic desensitization is a distinctive CBT procedure, and interpretation of transference is a distinctive psychoanalytic procedure. Also, it must be a framework for deciding on which procedures are most appropriate for specific clinical situations, presenting problems, and client groups.
3. A knowledge community: a network of people and institutions that sustain the approach as a form of practice – books, articles, training courses, journals, conferences, meetings, etc.

4. An account of the personal, social, cultural and historical context within which the approach has been developed. For example, previous research has identified the close link between the life-story of the key figures in the main psychotherapy theories (people such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Rogers), and the core characteristics of the approaches they founded.

A central aim of the current study is to develop a theory of Nature Therapy that satisfies the criteria listed above. Specifically, the thesis seeks to address the following set of research questions:

- a. What are the concepts (philosophical, propositional and observational) used by practitioners of Nature Therapy and in what way can they be articulated into the creation of a 'theory'?
- b. What are the therapeutic methods and interventions used by practitioners of Nature Therapy and in what way can they be integrated in practice?
- c. In what ways has the Nature Therapy approach been influenced by the biography and socio-cultural context of the person involved in its development?

The aim of this study is to provide grounds for the development of an innovative therapeutic approach titled Nature Therapy. The core of the approach will deal with the ways it incorporates nature into the process and to the different applications it has in practice. The thesis will present a framework, concepts and methods that can help practitioners incorporate 'nature' into their practice, as well as to develop this new form of therapy. It will include case studies that will examine the approach's impact upon different clients and will offer a chance to explore it through action.

The intention is to use this thesis as the basis for planning further research into the effectiveness of Nature Therapy, informed by the Guidelines for the Evaluation of

Complex Interventions (MRC, 2000). It is also hoped that the study will provide guidelines that may be valuable for other psychotherapy practitioners engaged in the early stages of establishing innovative forms of practice.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The study that has been undertaken comprises a series of action research cycles that took place over a period of several years. It is not possible, within the space limitations of this thesis, to include full documentation of all aspects of the research that has been carried out. Accordingly, the thesis incorporates a selection of relevant material, along with copies of additional papers that have been published (see Appendix 3). A summary of thesis Chapters is provided below:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Beginning the Journey - Placing the Thesis in Context. This Chapter begins with a reflexive section that describes the researcher's biography and standpoint towards the issues that the thesis includes. As the researcher is directly involved in the study - as trainer and supervisor of the practitioners who facilitated the first case study and the facilitator of the second - this reflexive section sheds light on the way 'his story' might have influenced the study. Afterwards, aiming to place the thesis within its larger eco-socio-psycho context, and in order to highlight some of the dynamics that triggered its emergence, the second main section within the Chapter explores the evolution of the human - nature relationship, highlighting it from a specific social-psychological-environmental perspective. The Chapter concludes with a theoretical section where the key themes within Nature Therapy are presented, providing the thesis with its theoretical ground.

Chapter 3: A Review of the Relevant Research Literature. A literature review is presented, aiming to place the work within its academic milieu and to explore research done in the field. As this thesis imbibes from a number of disciplines, the review is mainly focused on two: Adventure Therapy and Drama Therapy. The first,

due to the resemblance in setting (working in nature) and the second due to its use of creative modes of work and use of rituals.

Chapter 4: Methodological Considerations. This Chapter contains three sub-Chapters. The first presents the methods which were chosen for the current research, using reflexive Action Research strategy and the Grounded Theory analytic approach. The second sub-Chapter presents the cycle of Action Research – the movement between the construction of theory, implementation of programmes and development of professional community. The last sub-Chapter presents research procedures: recruitment of participants, data collection, analysis, writing the report draft, receiving participant's feedback, writing the final report and publishing.

Chapter 5: 'Building a Home in Nature': Nature Therapy for Children with Special Needs - A case study. A qualitative research based on the experience of practitioners who facilitated a Nature Therapy programme in a school of children with special needs. The case study explores the programme's impact; focusing on the way nature influenced the process.

Chapter 6: 'Between the Circle and the Cycle' – using a description of Nature Therapy Training to Illustrate the Framework. This case study provides an in-depth description of an advanced Nature Therapy training. Using the voices of participants and facilitator, the Chapter presents fresh concepts and methods that can be incorporated in Nature Therapy work, as well as in the larger therapeutic community. Since the case study is carried out on 'normal' adults, it also highlights some of the impact that Nature Therapy can have upon clients. As the Chapter is written as a 'showing', it also provides a kind of protocol that can be used in the design of future training.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions. This Chapter discusses the research findings. The first unit relates to ways in which the framework was developed and generated from the Action Research cycle. The second unit summarizes the research outcomes, highlighting the main concepts and methods it produced. The third unit demonstrates ways in which the Ph.D. adds to the existing body of knowledge and to

the fields that stand at its basis. The fourth unit highlights ways in which the research can be applied to the development of future practice, research and theory. The last unit discusses the research's creditability and other methodological issues.

Chapter 8: Concluding the Journey.

Chapter 9: References.

Appendices. This section includes research procedures - documents relevant to the thesis; research and theoretical articles about Nature Therapy.

CHAPTER 2 - BEGINNING THE JOURNEY – PLACING THE WORK IN CONTEXT

2.0 Introduction

The aim of this Chapter is to provide the personal and theoretical context for the study. Because the research that was carried out involved my own participation as therapist and trainer, and also as researcher, it seemed appropriate to place special emphasis on reflexive methodology (explained more fully in Chapter 4). The use of reflexivity in research means that the researcher does everything possible to be open about his or her biases, expectations, and relevant life experiences. The first major section of this Chapter, therefore (section 2.1) attempts to place the researcher within the context of my own biography, experience, and values. The second major part of the Chapter (section 2.2) introduces the main theoretical, philosophical, conceptual and historical ideas that have informed the development of this piece of research. Because Nature Therapy is a pluralistic or integrative model of therapy, and encompasses aspects of practice not usually addressed in therapy theories, Section 2.2 is wide-ranging in its scope. In section 2.3, the key themes to emerge from the earlier parts of the Chapter are identified.

2.1 The Place I Come From - A Reflexive Perspective on the Journey

'Know the place you came from,

Know the place you are going to...'

(David Ben Gurion, The first Israeli prime-minister and desert lover)

(Translated from Hebrew)

2.1.1 Prologue. 8th September 2006

The hour is 20:10 and I am sitting on the balcony of Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore, Scotland. The sun is setting but the temperature is pleasant. I am far away from home, but after spending a week at Abertay University, with the trees and

mountains I feel at home. Coming here after a week's supervision I did not plan to write this Chapter, but spending time in the woods today made me reflect upon this journey and the writing of this Ph.D. thesis. The many spiders I came across, building and containing their homes made me think of my own home, my family, friends and community. I also thought about Nature Therapy as a kind of home that has been built during the last 4-5 years. It is amazing that the two journeys - as father to my children and as 'father' of Nature Therapy - started simultaneously. In a few days, when I return home, we will be moving to the kibbutz I lived in when I first wrote the words 'Nature Therapy' sitting in the oak woods, above the Banias River, on the edge of the Golan Heights, my home...

2.1.2 My Personal Journey – An Autobiographical Perspective

Trying to explore the connection between my personal journey and the development of Nature Therapy, it seems that the two stories are intertwined - perhaps inseparable... it seems that only now am I taking my first independent steps...

Therefore, I have chosen to explore the issue by looking into 'our' relationship throughout my development, from early childhood until today.

Early Childhood

I was born in Zahala, a small suburb in Tel-Aviv, Israel. Though I believe I was raised by two loving parents and I know I had a sister who was 4 years younger than I was, my strongest memories from early childhood relate to our two Alsatian dogs. Reflecting on it now, nearly 30 years, later it seems that this powerful memory is connected to the feeling that they were always there, taking care and being with me. Stories that run in the family taught me that when I was a baby, Gipsy, the dog allowed only my parents to come near me and touch me, and Capi, the bitch used to sleep by my bed and follow me wherever I went. Later, when I had difficulties in school, starting to read only in the fourth grade (not to talk about basic mathematics which I still cannot handle), and finding it hard to sit on a chair in class all day long, I found refuge in the orchard behind our home, running there alone or with my dogs. There, I could find peace; nothing I did was 'wrong', no one called me names, punished me or sent me to sit near the principal's office. Luckily enough, when I

reached third grade my home-room teacher left school and the new teacher did not ask me to read in front of the class. Instead, she found supportive ways to make use of my restless mode of being. She used to send me to water the plants, help the administrator and bring chalks... I was a strange boy, spending much time within my own imagination, protecting ants from being stepped on and talking to the dogs. I was quite lonely. I do not know if that is what I felt then, but thinking of it now makes me sad. Nature was indeed a safe and containing place for me, one in which I could play, imagine and be whomever I wanted to be.

My mother was very concerned about my performance in school and did all she could to help, taking me to a private tutor (who I hated), sending me to psychologists (whom I disliked) and meeting the school principle on a regular basis. My father was hardly home, and when he was present he mainly watched T.V. Reflecting on it now, being a father and a therapist, it seems they simply did not know how to join me, how to be with me. I think they were embarrassed by my dramatic personality and love of dance. They did not know what to do and how to deal with my way of being. I know my father wanted me to be like his friends' sons, playing tennis and behaving 'like a man' and tried to shape me like them. I do not know what my mother's story was; I think she really wanted me to be happy, but our concepts of happiness were so different. She took me to concerts and taught me manners, but I wanted to dance, make up stories, play in the sand and touch frogs.

Today, some 30 years later, the orchard behind our home is tree-cleared and the open wild space is turning into a housing complex.

Teenager (age: 12-18)

When I was 12, after much concerted effort on my parents' part, I moved to a special class, in a new school outside my settlement. It was oriented around environmental studies and knowledge of the land. Its syllabus was much more experiential; one that included weekly trips and intensive workshops in nature throughout the year. As it had quite a different orientation than other classes in school it was named 'the weirdoes'... but at least we were a group... This change gave me a new lease on life, not only because it allowed me to start afresh in a place where I was

not known as the 'dyslectic' or 'strange' kid, but also since it made room for my skills, interests and talents (which were not reading, writing or sitting quietly). The fact that I was used to being in nature became a strength and allowed me to feel acknowledged and respected by my peer group, a group in which I felt safe and loved, perhaps for the first time in my life. My home-room teacher liked me and did not seem to make a fuss about my being a poor student. By that time the issue of dyslexia was beginning to receive recognition and my mother was efficient and made sure that I was diagnosed, and that I receive the proper help and attitude in school. As school was in a different settlement, I used to walk there through the same orchard where I used to run to as a younger child. These daily journeys, before and after school, allowed me the private time to touch base with my secret and imaginary space. Thinking of it now, it seems that my connection with this small natural zone behind my house, with its orange trees, open-wild landscape and small stream, was very intimate, romantic and from a psychological standpoint, even symbiotic. I knew the fox den and the falcon's nest in spring, the best tree to pick figs in summer, and the hideouts from the orchard watchman in winter, after being spotted picking oranges. Today, I would probably not allow my children to make this journey alone, but in those days the issue of safety was different and I do not remember being scared. Nature was home.

When I was fifteen my hobby of horse-riding became more serious. My parents gave me my own horse, and I took care of it and rode daily. I used to leave school early and go to the stable. Talking to my horse as if he was a person made some of the people in the stable laugh, but at the same time helped me find other people who also talked to their animals...There I met people who joined my journeys in nature, and we rode through orchards together. I was practicing dressage and show jumping, so I started competing and realized that I liked it. I made friends with riders my age and formed meaningful friendships and relationships.

I was still a poor student, needing to pass intermediate examinations every summer and ongoing private tuition in mathematics, which I hated. Thankfully, my horse, the orchards and friends were there to provide compensation.

Young Adult (age 18-24)

On reaching the age of 18, I was recruited into the Israeli army. I found myself spending 3 years in a bunker deep underground. Companionship was good, but the work itself did not give me meaning or pleasure and I could hardly wait for it to end. On weekends and holidays, I used to go to the desert with one or two friends, walking through the mountains, sleeping out and watching animals. During this period, I developed a special love for birds of prey, which I cherish to this very day. This was a different experience in nature, going on adventurous journeys, seeking to confront my physical and psychological strength, using the time to get to know friends from additional perspectives and deepen our relationships. During this time, I strengthened my outdoor skills: navigating, climbing and surviving in the wilderness. It was during this period of time I realized that my future would be linked with nature and its conservation.

As soon as I finished my army service, I moved up north, lived on a small kibbutz (a communal settlement) and joined the first B.A Ecology Studies in Israel, at Tel-Hai College. As a scientific and technological/ environmental science, it did not answer most of my expectations, which apparently related more to the philosophical, psychological and educational aspects of this field and not to empirical subjects such as physics, mathematics and chemistry... Nevertheless, the people I met there shared my love for nature; some of them were involved in environmental activism, nature conservation activities and environmental education. Under their influence, I joined the regional field school (a network of the Israeli Society for the Protection of Nature), received training as a Nature Guide and worked as a part-time instructor. During the three years of my B.A studies, I used to take people for guided walks in nature, telling them some of the history, botany and zoology of this beautiful area. At the same time, in order to cover my living expenses, I took care of the kibbutz stable, and worked with the kibbutz kids, particularly those who had emotional, physical and/or social difficulties. The parallel jobs made me aware not only of the pleasure I got from working with people in nature but also of the meaningful interactions they create.

Another important way I was affected by the transition to the north of the country connects to the time it allowed me to spend in a new natural environment; a

wild one, rich with water and animals. Not being familiar with the area, I took time to wander around without a map, discovering the hidden springs and ponds, the deserted fruit orchards and the wild animals... the revelation of what had become my new home, gave me the comfort I needed for my struggles with mathematics and physics. I was also giving more space to my creativity and sexuality, and found that I could give my body more freedom. Swimming naked in the ponds, dancing with the wind and finding a fig tree where I could come with my partner to make love. Nature was home.

The Wolves, the Moon and I (age 24-26)

After having finalized my B.A in Ecology, I joined a nature conservation research project that aimed at studying and protecting the Golan Heights wolves. As the wolf population grew in the area, more and more cattle were attacked by them and damaged the farmers' income. As a result, the farmers tried to kill the wolves by poisoning them, an illegal act that jeopardized the entire food-chain of the Golan Heights and the vulture population in particular. The research was carried out in order to study the wolf's ecology and behaviour, while finding ways to protect the cattle. I was involved in the first section of the project. My role was to collect data on the wolves, analyze it and then recommend a conservation policy. Since wolves can move very fast through harsh terrain and as they are very shy, the only way to 'watch' them is by putting a radio transmitter on their necks and follow them from a jeep while continually spotting them through the radio-telemetry receiver. Doing research on animals active at night changed my entire life style. Each trucking started by spotting a particular radio-marked wolf 2-3 hours before sunset, when I also tried to make eye contact with the wolf and the pack, collect behavioural data and then continue following the pack until 2-3 hours after sunrise, at which time I could sometimes come into eye contact with them again and conclude the observation. Those two years, were very special for me as they gave me a chance to get into the wilderness as I have never done before. Alone with the moon, following the wolves, the path finders of mythological wolf power in the North American heritage (Sams & Carson, 1988), made me encounter aspects of my personality of which I had never before been aware. Living in a form of isolation and separation, away from my family, friends and my girl friend (a two-year relationship that did not last through the 'wolf period') allowed me to strip off the symbols of culture and simply be me: to dance with the trees, sing

with the birds and cry with the wolves. Joining the wolves on an everyday basis, knowing them as if I was a pack member, allowed me to be part of their cycle, join in feeling their pain and death and celebrate their communal play and birth, identifying with the stories of life and death. It made me accept some of my own, parallel stories, and relate to them from a holistic point of view; addressing them as part of the ever lasting cycle. As most of the experiences I encountered during this time were non-verbal, it is hard for me to name specific elements that the wolves touched within me. I can say that they relate to my deep, spiritual or mystical aspects. It is clear that my experience with them has changed my perception of life and my choices of how to live. They say that if you meet a wolf eye to eye, you will never forget him. Most of the eyes I met have already died; all of them continue to live on within ...

On the morning of the 3rd of July 1996, I discovered a massive poisoning in the north-east zone of the Golan Heights. More than 40 vultures died, as well as many other mammal predators (jackals, foxes, wild boar...). No wolf was found dead. Thought I had warned the authorities previously as to the possibility of such an event, I saw it happening, and was unsuccessful in preventing it. Heartbroken and in despair, I left the research, packed up my jeep and left the Golan Heights.

Dance and Drama – In Search of Non-verbal Expression and Healing
(age 25-29)

During the years I spent with the wolves, I continued to facilitate groups in nature. I was working for the Nesia Institute, an organization that works on personal development in a style that facilitates the integration of art, Jewish text, heritage and work in nature in order to explore identity issues. During one of these projects, I participated in a Contact Improvisation workshop led by Arye Bursztyn. It felt wonderful to dance, touch and be touched; to be in my body and have Arye as a gentle yet present witness. Following my instincts, I found myself driving once a week to his contact improvisation classes in Tel-Aviv. I was drawn to his non-judgmental, containing, allowing, creative, modest and generous way of 'space giving' (I use this phrase as it describes my sense of his teaching style). I joined Arye's two-year New Dance training, which led to the co-founding of an independent improvisation dance group, and to performing. Contact Improvisation emerged as an artistic-social-

political-embodied dance form, protesting against the aesthetic orientation of modern dance forms and individualistic life style. It had a strong social aspect embedded in its physical form: two people dancing together keeping constant physical touch, its central core resembling that of a Jam session. Contact Improvisation focuses around the physical concept of gravity and momentum, 'being in the moment' and creating an improvised reality. It emphasizes the fluidity and authenticity of movement rather than its aesthetics. As such, it combines elements from martial arts (such as Chi-Kong, Aikido and Tai-Chi), soft body work (Feldenkrais and Yoga) and modern dance techniques, with philosophical ideas of the peace movement that emerged in the seventies in the U.S.A. Entering the world of Contact Improvisation allowed me to find a concrete, physical dance form in which I could express myself creatively, find people I liked and develop myself as a dancer, without requiring the conventional dance scene (dressing up, going to parties, being in the studio a specific amount of time before performing, studying with these teachers or those...). In addition, the relationship shared with Arye was very meaningful and inspiring for me. Although he was a Gestalt therapist, we never had a therapeutic contract and remained dance teacher and student. Nevertheless, it was one of the most therapeutic relationships I ever had...

With Arye's support I started a three year post-graduate Drama Therapy training at Tel Hai College, discovering the therapeutic impact of the fantastic ('as if') reality; creative and non-verbal modes of work, and the power of group work and rituals. The intensive training gave me a framework for working as a therapist, as well as allowing me to go through a meaningful personal process connecting to my strength and abilities: dance, drama and imagination, and apparently, group work. In addition, Professor Mooli Lahad (one of the pioneers of Drama Therapy, founder of the Six-Piece Story Making technique and the BASICPH approach; author of *Creative Supervision*) was my teacher for 3 years. He supported my creative and spontaneous mode of working, while confronting my objections to Drama Therapy theory and to working within its classical framework. In fact, he nearly threw me out of his training, as he did not approve of the ways I incorporated Contact Improvisation ideas into Drama Therapy, claiming that I should first become an efficient Drama Therapist and only then make the 'strange' combinations I did while studying (a rational claim that I

can now totally agree with). I found meaning and I loved the studies - it was the first time I was able to complete a course in academic training without my mother's intervention.

Throughout this period, I deepened my experience and knowledge in body therapy and Contact Improvisation dance. I participated in advanced workshops around the world, teaching and performing, and was very active in the forming of a Contact Improvisation community in Israel. This activity included the formation of the Israeli Contact Improvisation teacher's laboratory meetings, and later on, experimental laboratories exploring the links between Contact Improvisation and psychotherapy (funded by the BI ARTS project conducted by the British Council in Israel, 2002). The combination of Drama Therapy and Contact Improvisation dance, both integrative disciplines challenged me to investigate ways in which I could integrate all of my loves into one practice. Soon after I completed my Drama Therapy studies, I started working as a Drama therapist. In this capacity, I met Joseph, an autistic child who did not want to enter the clinic and asked me to join him for walks in nature... The experience with Joseph was in many ways the 'gateway' into my journey towards the creation of Nature Therapy and the writing of the current Ph.D. (More about the work with Joseph can be found in Berger and McLeod, 2006; Appendix 3)

Nature - My Therapeutic Space (within the same ages of 25-29)

After I left wolf research, I moved to Snir, a small kibbutz, located between the Golan Heights and the Hula Valley, just above the beautiful Banias River reserve. It enabled me to see the Golan Heights, yet, not be 'in it'. It also allowed me a unique chance to get to know the Banias River, a 5 minute walk from my home. I gradually formed a specific way of living: waking up with sunrise, going to the river, doing body work that involved direct contact with nature (such as dancing with the wind, climbing a tree), meditating, swimming in the river and returning home. Then, when I came back from school or work, I went to the river once again, taking some time for reflection and going for a last swim. Thinking of it now, it seems that these repetitive activities gave me a sense of order in life, while providing personal time to adjust to the changes they contained. During my Drama Therapy training, the time I spent at the river have provided a safe space for 'self reflection', where I could make my own

meaning, as opposed to the meanings and interpretations that were given to me by my Drama Therapy teachers and supervisors. The private time I spent in the Bannia included physical (and meta-physical) experiments, exploring the impact that direct contact with nature had upon my sensations, dreams and images, and my overall perception of life. They included explorations such as sleeping on a tree or in a cave, spending time inside hollow trees, crawling, walking naked with blindfolds over my eyes, as if to make sense of the world, and spending time hanging (using sling rappelling gear) above the big water fall. Due to these explorations, my sensory and metaphysical awareness changed. I could hear and sense things I had never heard before. At times, I felt as if the trees were watching me... in fact I became aware of strange sensations that presented themselves after sunset, including a new sense of fear emanating from nature. Some spots in the reserve felt friendly and loving while others felt angry and dangerous. Such intimate relationship with the river did not only change my concrete knowledge and discovery of things such as eagle and owl nests and the badger's den, it also changed my perception of my being. I could identify with things I never even knew existed before. I was able to sense things that happened in the past and that could happen in the future.

This is the first time I am trying to put these elements into writing and share them with people. It feels strange. Trying to use the academic knowledge I have acquired towards the end of writing this Ph.D., I would say that it seems these experiments expanded my 'ecological self' and helped me engage with a wider cosmic knowledge (Berger & McLeod, 2006). I presume that the tacit knowledge I found on the river underlines my faith and my confidence in facilitating, teaching and developing Nature Therapy.

As part of my final assignment for the completion of my Drama Therapy training, I wrote a paper entitled 'Nature Therapy', in which I offered a draft of a therapeutic, nature-oriented model. Based on this theme, I designed a pilot programme titled: 'Encounter in Nature', which later operated in schools and was granted the Ford Foundation Reward in 2002.

Becoming and Being a Father (29 - present)

I met Lilach, an energetic educational and clinical psychologist, who used to water the floor along with watering the flowers in her clinic, while being supervised for my work on the 'Encounters in Nature' programme. Things developed in

surprising ways, and we decided after our second supervision meeting to change our contract, depart supervision and begin dating. A short time later Lilach became pregnant, and I was shocked. I was accustomed to a bachelor's individualistic life style (ever since my second year with the wolves), and the thought of entering a serious relationship, not to mention becoming a father, was inconceivable. Not finding answers to questions which popped up, I turned back to nature. This time, four years after having left the wolves and the Golan Heights, I headed back, straight to the hideout above the gorge in which I used to watch Kern's den, pack and puppies. After a sleepless night, calling out to them and receiving no answer, I realized they were no longer there. I went down to the actual location of the den. Recognizing familiar objects, such as an old shoe the puppies used to play with, I squeezed my way into the den and fell into a deep sleep. Several hours later, climbing up the cliff I saw them, as if they had been waiting for me all this time. We said goodbye – and I had received my answer. I was apparently ready to become the 'Alfa male' of a human pack, my very own family...

A few months later, Alon (Hebrew for oak tree) was born and following Lilach's request, we moved to her kibbutz to receive her family's support. Paradoxically enough, my Ph.D. journey started with Alon's birth, as, several months later, I took my first trip to Sheffield Hallam University in England, to work on the draft of a research proposal. Things got very hectic as I tried to juggle my role as an involved father who spends time with his child, while simultaneously struggling to undertake a Ph.D., run a new therapeutic programme, make a living and continue to dance. Going into counseling, working with a Jungian 'father figure' therapist helped me articulate this new situation. I found myself using 'a human therapist' to work through issues dealing with intrapersonal issues and relationships. In addition, this experiment taught me something about Jungian psychology, and opened up another dimension of Drama Therapy's use of symbols and archetypes. My daughter Neta (Hebrew for sapling) was born two years later, while I had moved my Ph.D. studies from Sheffield to Dundee, together with the opening of the first post-graduate Nature Therapy training. As I was more confident in the role of father it was easier at first, until, a few months later, Lilach went into a post-birth depression. I was a heavy assignment to manage everything; emotionally containing Lilach and acknowledging

that we were not immune from such a phenomenon. This process had a major impact upon our life as we realized the personal and family price we paid for our chase after money, honour and success. A year and a half later, having received help our life changed once again. Lilach emerged from the depression, stronger and more connected to her strength. Ever since this episode, I am much more aware of the way I navigate my post-modern life style, trying to make choices that allow me to keep a balance between the different roles and demands in life. Living so close to nature makes it easy to spend daily family time in nature, allowing my children the freedom to experiment, play and create.

2.1.3 The Impact of Culture

As I started thinking of ways in which society and culture have shaped my life, I immediately began writing in the sense of 'we' rather than as 'I'. Upon reflection it seems as if I was educated and raised upon values which are common to most middleclass, secular Israelis. Therefore, in this sub-Chapter, I will write as 'we' to describe my interpretation of a collective identity. I will transfer back to 'I', as I try to share the personal meanings I give to this larger context.

The Place of Rituals and the Symbolic Place of Nature in my Life

Thinking of my identity in the cultural sense, I see myself first of all as an Israeli and only then as a Jew. Being raised in a secular settlement and a non-religious family, keeping Shabbat, eating kosher, going to synagogue, etc., had only minor role in my life. At the same time, as Jewish culture, symbols, language and holidays are strongly embedded in the collective Israeli identity and way of living, I am sure they affected my personality on different levels of awareness. Most of the Jewish holidays are correlated with nature's cycle, so it's hard not to be aware and influenced by this human - nature relationship. The celebration of holidays in kindergartens and preliminary schools include rituals that revolve around these concepts: On Tu Bishvat, which marks the time of tree planting we plant trees, on Shavuot (Feast of Harvest) we decorate our homes with the 'seven species', and during Succoth, which marks the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the holy land, we live and sleep outdoors in tent-like constructions made from wood and fabric, from which we can see the stars...

When I left my parents' home and worked in the Nesia Institute (an organization working on personal development in a facilitation style that integrates art, Jewish text, heritage and work in nature), I realized that traditional rituals such as Sabbath songs and prayers contribute to my identity, help me experience togetherness and get in touch with the power of the collective. I was attracted to various aspects of this heritage, and when I came back to my secular kibbutz and family, I found myself forming traditional rituals, maintaining their main ideas and adapting them to secular and pluralistic thinking. For example, the traditional Sabbath candle-lighting ritual, in which the woman lights candles, turned into a ritual in which each person (including children and men) shared something from the week that had passed and then each lit a candle. Reflecting on this process now helps me understand the reason that Nature Therapy has been given such a ritualistic orientation.

2.1.4 Connection to the Land

As an Israeli, the issue of land is very significant; the keeping and holding of our land is embedded in our history and first and foremost, has an existential meaning. A safe territory equals a safe life. I would venture to say that this is true for most people around the world. However, it assumes an additional meaning for those who belong to a nation whose spiritual well-being is embedded in the land; a nation that was expelled from their land and won it back by war and have had to protect it ever since. This connection to the land is also rooted in the Israeli educational system, as each class (from the first grade) goes for 'getting to know the land' trips as part of the yearly school syllabus. Youth movement activities are also connected to this concept, reflected during their outdoor camps. In this sense, from my subjective standpoint, it seems that the Israeli sense of connection to the land and the feeling of nationalism is far stronger than those of people whose national narratives are less 'land-connected'. I feel a strong sense of connection to this land: the landscape in which I grew up, live in and where I raise my children. As a Nature therapist, I feel a difference when I facilitate Nature Therapy 'on my native land' or when I do it abroad. There is some kind of an intimate connection I have with 'Israeli nature' that I do not have anywhere else. It is important to say that I can and do form an intimate relationship with 'nature'

outside of Israel. It seems that all trees, rivers and mountains are composed of the same elements and speak the same language...

When I teach or work abroad, I take a day or two before the training starts, to get to know this 'new nature', and find my own relationship and connection with it. I do not need to know its historical story, but I do need to get a sense (or taste) of its wild side. As I write this section, I remember a strange incident I had when I facilitated Nature Therapy training in a park and a forest planted on a quarry in Sheffield, U.K. The trees were small and very young and the ground felt strange. Although there were beautiful parts in the park, a depressing overtone took form within me in this specific natural setting. I encountered a strange feeling of grief and sadness and after the training was over, I got sick (something that never happens to me after Nature Therapy intensives). I realized that the ground and small stream that ran through it were polluted; that all the trees were human planted, the ancient woods having been uprooted and destroyed. This event, together with similar incidents that happened to me, raised my awareness of the strong meta-physical connection and identification I have with nature where ever it may be. Although a long time passed since my childhood, when I protected ants from being stepped on, and from the time I tried to save the wolves and vultures of the Golan Heights, it seems that I still carry their cry. In this respect, it seems that my connection to nature is stronger than connection to any specific territory.

2.1.5 The Meaning of Therapy for Me

Throughout my life, I have had various experiences with therapy. My experiences included being a client, student and therapist, receiving and giving supervision. As a person with ADHD, I learned to appreciate non-verbal modes of working that allowed me to express and explore myself in indirect ways, ways that did not need external interpretation or explanations. Having worked with different therapists and supervisors enabled me to take different elements from each. From Arye I learned 'not knowing', improvisation and deep trust in the process of grounding. From Mooli, I learned the power of story-making and the creative process. From Michal (my former supervisor, now my colleague) I learned about forgiveness

and the creative mode of working. From John, I learned the flattening of hierarchy, acceptance and an analytical, yet narrative, stand point.

Based on the above experiences, I have articulated my own meaning of what constitutes 'good' therapy:

- (1) Working in the here and now (spontaneity).
- (2) Keeping an authentic stand point.
- (3) Giving the process time to unfold, staying with 'not knowing' and curiosity until something clear unfolds.
- (4) Working creatively.
- (5) Using art and non-verbal modes of working.
- (6) Flattening hierarchies and empowering the client.
- (7) Not taking responsibility over the client's life, helping the client contain himself/herself rather than keeping him/her depended on the therapist.
- (8) Integrating mind, body and spirit in the work.
- (9) Working systematically.
- (10) Keeping an active relationship with nature.

2.1.6 The Meaning of Nature for Me

For me nature means being myself, in an authentic and creative way, alone and together; it gives me a deep sense of home. This Ph.D. uses originated from a constructivist standpoint, so I have tried not to debate the question or definition of 'what is nature?'... at the same time it is clear to me that the nature that I love most, and the one I struggle to maintain is wild...an untouched and uncontrollable environment; a landscape that reminds me where I came from and where I will be going ...

Each theoretician's life story is connected to the theory s/he creates, and his/her theory emerges from within specific social-cultural context, i.e., Freud, who was a doctor, created psychoanalysis at a time when medical/scientific frameworks overtook religion (West, 2000; McLeod, 2003a).

Similar to this process, my life story is connected to the creation and emergence of Nature Therapy. Nature Therapy, it seems, reflects from pondering all the choices I have made and the different roles I hold, and integrating them in a way that will allow me to keep a sense of unity. How can I hold all these dualities and maintain a meaningful and happy life?

- How can I be an active father, one who spends time with his children and, at the same time, develop a busy career, work on a Ph.D. and manage growing financial demands?
- How can I live within a capitalistic and individualistic society, yet maintain community and a profound lifestyle 'in relationship with others'?
- How can I live a secular life and yet include spiritual elements in my life?
- How can I maintain an academic and professional career, spend time sitting in front of the computer and yet keep a good mind-body connection?
- How can I do all the things I 'need to do' and yet find time to see friends, dance and spend time in nature?

Nature Therapy is my attempt to create a space for all the things I care about in life: simplicity, authenticity, creativity and deep relationships, despite being part of a capitalistic and individualistic life style. From a personal perspective, it would seem that I am trying to create my own reality, a community which appreciates similar values and is willing to live according to them. As such the Action Research orientation of this Ph.D. is helping me transform these ideas and theories into reality...

Why Me?

Why me? This is a question relating to the argument whereby every theoretician is simply 'in the right place at the right time' and if it has not been him/her, it would have been someone else with similar ideas... The transition into the era of post-modernism has had many impacts. One of them is the 'New Age' and different mind-body therapeutic frameworks that are being developed besides (Chapter 2.2.). Nature Therapy can be considered one of these therapeutic frameworks with specific reference to human - nature relationship. As such, it seems that my integrative professional journey (ecology, contact improvisation dance, drama therapy and body therapy) together with my personal journey were 'found suitable' for the delivery of this approach. In addition, it may be that my creative and 'boundary-testing' personality, combined with my analytic and systemic character, was the kind of personality needed in order to turn this eclectic and spontaneous way of doing therapy into an academic framework.

2.2 A Social-Psychological-Environmental Exploration into the Evolution of the Relationship between Humans Beings and Nature

To place this thesis within its larger social-psychological-environmental context, this Chapter seeks to build a comprehensive perspective into the evolution of the human-nature relationship.

2.2.1 Prologue

In order to position this Ph.D. within the field of psychotherapy as a whole, it seems appropriate to start with an illustration of some of the psycho-social processes that took place throughout history and explore them within a human - nature relationship context. The assumption that will lead this exploration is that there is a link between technological development, the damaging of the environment and the process of distancing from nature. These are also connected to the process of distancing from communal and spiritual ways of living, the development of psychotherapy and the current emergence of new, mind-body-spirit forms of therapies. With the relationship with nature as a reference point, this exploration will relate to the ways in which spiritual-emotional and physical support was addressed and transmitted in the past and the way it is being addressed in present. Exploring the

relationship between humans and nature seems to be an impossible task, as it spans all fields of life and ranges throughout human history, from pre-historical times to the present and probably also to the future. This relationship had (and still has) important emotional and spiritual implications, as can be seen in the ancient gods' sculptures, religious rituals and holy attitudes towards natural phenomena and natural places; rivers such as the Ganges and Nile or mountains such as Sinai and Kilimanjaro (Naor, 1999). Nevertheless, the majority of conventional psychological literature hardly relates to this relationship, focusing only on person-to-person interactions and relationships (McLeod, 2003). The context of this Ph.D. requires deeper acknowledgment and reference to those processes focusing on several therapeutic aspects that existed within the historical human - nature relationship.

Respecting the vastness of the issues that are at stake, and acknowledging the limitations of the present work, the discussion will attempt to focus on several parallel processes that took place in the last 200 years, after the industrial and scientific revolutions of the 18th century. As such, this review will present some outlooks, ways of living and theories that shaped and influenced the human - nature relationship, as well as environmental, social and psychological standpoints. The review will begin with a short presentation and observation of ways in which some indigenous cultures related to life, nature and healing. Being aware of the cultural diversity that exists between different indigenous groups, it will not attempt to present an in-depth overview of these cultures or discuss these different approaches, but to highlight a specific attitude to life and nature that characterized these cultures and groups. Presenting these specific standpoints will help demonstrate the difference in parallel relationships today and the social-ecological-psychological process that led to the current work. The chapter will then continue with an exploration of the emergence of Deep Ecology, Ecopsychology and other environmental movements and philosophies, such that value the intrinsic value of nature and offer an alternative relationship with it. The Chapter will conclude with a statement placing the pre-assumptions and the spiritual attitudes of this Ph.D. within this philosophical-psychological-ecological-social context and highlight the possible contribution of this Ph.D. to the issue.

2.2.2 Human – Nature Relationships in Traditional Cultures

Introduction

As an introduction to this review of the indigenous perspective of the human - nature relationship and its relation to social-psychological standpoints, it is important to highlight some of the review's limitations. Seeking to present a unified standpoint of an issue that has many different perspectives and expressions in different indigenous groups, the review will make generalizations that might oversimplify and hide some of the heterogenic, diversity and richness of these cultures and issue. Presenting a general indigenous perspective (which is shared in diverse ways by different indigenous groups), the subchapter will seek to highlight some of the differences that exist between the 'indigenous attitude' towards nature, life and healing and to parallel, yet different, attitudes of our time.

It is also important to say that coming from a holistic standpoint, it seems impossible to separate the issue of the current exploration from other aspects of life as they are connected and intertwined...

In times when people lived in nature, life and culture was strongly connected to nature, people depended on it directly for their physical, social and spiritual existence. This attitude to nature was part of a holistic attitude towards life, as the individual was part of a family, part of the tribe, which was also part of nature and of the universe. Each of these elements was connected to, embedded in, and interdependent on the other. A change in one meant a change in the others (Abram, 1996; Eliade, 1959; Harvey 2006; Megged, 1998; Turner, 1986). Belonging, partnership and connectedness with nature are illustrated in the following Native American Songs:

The trees and flowers are our brothers and sisters

They talk to us

If we listen we can hear them

(Cohen, 1997) (Arhhapo tribe)

What is man without the animal?

*If they disappear man would die from the troubled lowliness of
the spirit*

What will happen to the animals will happen to the people

All things are connected

What will happen to the earth will happen to the earth child

(Cohen, 1997) (Duwamish tribe) (Translated from Hebrew)

The songs quoted above represent the deep sense of oneness embedded in these cultures, a 'collective identity' held within the religion. The religion included a 'reward and retribution' policy that implemented all life activities, including the relationship and way of behaving with nature (Megged, 1998). As people were in constant and direct contact with the uncontrollable forces of nature, they developed a mystical attitude and way of being which helped their physical-spiritual and emotional existence. This mystical attitude was highlighted by rituals aiming to protect them from nature's destructive forces and to enable them to feel a sense of control over it (Megged, 1998). Rituals had a strong role and function in life as they gave people a sense of order, security and meaning fostering a feeling of togetherness while providing a sense of control over the uncertainties of life (Evans, 1997; Hazan, 1992; Jennings, 1995; Turner, 1986). Rituals had an essential role, as they were used to help the individual and the community to heal pain and misfortune. They also had a role in keeping a balanced social structure, helping people in the transition from one stage (social status) to another (Evans, 1997; Hazan, 1992; Jennings, 1995a; Turner, 1986). In addition, 'ecological' ceremonies were performed in order to negotiate with the spirits for the 'right ecological conditions': enough rain in summer, but not too much in winter (Abrams, 1996; Megged, 1998). As the concepts of spirituality, physicality and meta-physicality, reality and fantasy, human and natural were connected, people believed in transfiguration of souls, which cycled between all life forms. As such, a person could carry a former river's soul in his/her present life and enter the body of an animal once 'his/her body' died (Abrams, 1996; Eliade, 1959; Harvey 2006; Megged, 1998; Turner, 1986). According to this outlook, the connection with the 'spirits of nature' was essential for the existence of the continuity of generations and the future of life on earth. People kept a connection with the physical representation of the spirits –

animals, plants and landscapes, rivers, mountains, etc. (Abrams, 1992; Megged, 1998). This concept can be illustrated by an example taken from the Karinia tribe in Venezuela: According to the tribe's heritage, the father would hunt a bird for his new born baby. The soul of this hunted (totem) animal would transform into the child, providing lifetime protection. The soul of the bird would connect the child and the bird's family and by that enlarge the family into a wider, non-human family. In addition the bird's soul would inspire the person's animal and enlarge his/her ability to hear and feel the spirits, as well as the concrete voices of nature. This action empowered the entire tribe, as it reinforced their collective totem and by that the connection to the physical and meta-physical worlds (Megged, 1998). According to this ecological-spiritual belief, harm caused to a natural element (animal, plant, river...) may damage a person or a community. This way of addressing the world may explain why the indigenous religion includes ecological laws aimed at the protection of this human-nature cycle (Abrams, 1996; Megged, 1998).

Within traditional cultures, the Shaman, the healing man/woman, was responsible for keeping the harmony in life: between person and person, person and tribe, and between the larger cycle (person - tribe - nature – universe). Hi/her role was to protect values, beliefs and ways of living, which once harmed could lead to chaos, illness and misfortune of all forms (Eliade, 1959; Megged, 1998). This is why the Shaman was strongly connected to nature and worked to protect it. Nature offered the Shaman a strong link with the mystical world (the world of spirits, as well as concrete aid such as medicinal herbs. The meta-physical connection with nature allowed the Shaman to touch, see and foresee elements that could not have been addressed in other ways. The connection was used during ecstatic rituals, as the Shaman journeyed to other mystical dimensions in order to promote the interests of his/her community (Eliade, 1959, Megged, 1998). The Shaman in this case can be viewed as an ancient form of a Drama Therapist (Jennings, 1995a; 1998; Jones, 1996; Grainger, 1995), drawing his/her power from religion and community, performing healing activities through an ecstatic and meta-physical ritual (Eliade, 1959; Jennings, 1995a; Jones, 1996, Turner, 1986). It is important to point out that shamanism (and the shaman as its emissary) lived under a specific holistic 'life frame' in which the 'collective identity' had a strong presence. The tribe was unified under one language, code of ethics and belief system which were embedded in a specific symbolism. This symbolism

connected between the living people and those which had died, between the spiritual, meta-physical and physical, and between human and nature. It was this sense of collectiveness and oneness which empowered the Shaman and allowed him/herto carry out the healing work (Megged, 1998). According to this belief, hurting or destroying one element within this gentle fabric could weaken the Shaman's (and tribe) healing and transformative powers, which could lead to damage or destruction of a person, tribe and/or habitat. An example for such a situation is the story of the Taromara tribe in Mexico. A story that highlights many other kinds of destruction and extinction around the world:

'The Piota cactus was holy for the people of the Taromara tribe. It was identified as a twin brother of the sun, the 'mighty god'. The cactus gave life to the tribe's people and protected them. As such the tribe's people used to greet and ritualize the Piota, as it would answer their blessings and wishes. When the 'white' people entered the tribe's territory, conquering the land with the rail train, the holy Piota cactus got run over and destroyed. The anger of the cactus led to many catastrophes in the tribe: years of poverty, illness and misfortune' (Megged, 1998: 20).

Other examples of the destruction of culture, habitats and life forms caused by the white/modern man can be correlated to the extinction of animals or plants that used to hold specific healing qualities. Such an attitude may have led to the weakening of the Shaman, who could not perform successful curative rituals without his/her meta-physical abilities and use of traditional medicine materials. Since the Shaman used to act as the tribe's doctor, using herbs to treat the sick, this growing process of ecological extinction and destruction led to an increasing number of sickness and misfortunes, ending with the destabilization of the Shaman's authority, and in many cases to the destruction and extinction of the tribe and cult. The process was further advanced, as indigenous people were assimilated with the 'white man' or transferred to other locations (reserves) to which they did not feel connected, and were not able to maintain their heritage (Megged, 1998).

In concluding this section of the Chapter, it seems right to quote Chief Seattle's speech, as it was given to his Duwamish people in 1854. Although there has been considerable controversy about the authenticity of Chief Seattle's speech

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sealth>) and it may, in fact, be legend, it can nevertheless give a sense of the beautiful, holistic and interconnected way these people related to nature. It can also highlight some of the differences between their 'old' ways of addressing the world and the 'new' - modern and technological ones.

'How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? This idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth, when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us.

The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices of the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man- all belong to the same family.

The shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you our land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers, they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children that it is sacred, and each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The red man has always retreated before the advancing white man, as the mist of the mountains runs before the morning sun. But the ashes of our fathers are sacred. Their graves are holy ground, and so these hills, these trees; this portion of the earth is consecrated to us. We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children, he does not care. His fathers' graves and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only desert...'

(Seed et al 1988, Thinking Like a Mountain: 67-73)

The Voice of the Earth

Introduction

In opposition to the interconnected and intrinsic position towards nature that indigenous cultures held towards nature, it seems like the main attitude towards 'plant earth' and 'nature' in present/modern times relates to nature from an instrumental standpoint, a position that does not value 'nature' for itself but as a resource that has functional uses and benefits for humans (Des Jardins, 2001). This attitude, which is still dominant today, connects to the individualistic and capitalistic way of living and influences not only environmental ethics and policies, but also overall social behaviors and attitudes and relationships with nature. Many writers argue that this attitude is a root cause of the environmental crisis and of the growing separation between people and nature (Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003). Over time, coupled with the development of technology, growth of the human population and their damaging impacts on the environment (Palmer, 2003), this perspective began to include more intrinsic standpoints that value nature in itself, with no dependence on outside factors (Des Jardins, 2001; Palmer, 2003). They connect human social-psychological process with

the relationships with nature and the process of caring for it. This subchapter will present some of these alternative standpoints; its main concepts and perspectives. It will highlight the diversity within them and conclude with a section that will highlight the way that NT relates to nature.

2.2.3 Deep Ecology

The term 'Deep Ecology' was officially presented in 1972 in a research article and conference given by the Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess (Drengson, 2005; Harding, 2005). It joined and gave power to a growing number of environmentalists and philosophers who had begun to voice out their concern regarding the destructive influence that the modern –technological society has upon the environment. These voices, heard from the 1920's onwards, can be related to people like John Muir, David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold (Drengson, 2005), pioneers in a social-ecological-political discussion that had just begun... Trying to present this philosophy (which later turned into a movement) from a narrative perspective, it seems helpful to tell Aldo Leopold's story as told by him in his book: 'A Sand County Almanac' (1948). Leopold began as a wildlife ranger appointed by the government to wipe out wolves. His mission was part of a national policy that aimed to eradicate the entire wolf population in order to save deer hunters 'unnecessary competition'. As a wildlife manager, Leopold adhered to an unquestionable belief that humans were superior to nature and thus morally justified in manipulating it, for the maximization of human welfare. The interesting process in Leopold's story highlights not only a dramatic change of values and standpoint towards life and nature, but also the circumstances which triggered it:

'We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful mauling. What was literally a pile of wolves, writhed and tumbled in the centre of an open flat at the foot of our rim rock.

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but

with more excitement than accuracy; how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable side-rocks.

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view.'

(Leopold, 1948, A Sand County Almanac: 129-130)

Relating to the citation in the context of this Ph.D., keeping in mind the times in which the story was written, it seems that two elements stand out remarkably: One relates to the process of transformation, a process in which a direct and 'deep' experience with 'wild nature' and an encounter with life and death, connected the person to a spiritual or religious experience in such a strong way that made him/her see the world differently and change his/her perspective about both nature and life (Harding, 2005). The other relates to the transformation itself: relating to the mountains and the wolf – the ecosystem - as an entity, as a living presence, led Leopold to relate to humans as 'plain members of the biotic community' (Harding, 2005).

This story highlights the transition from an instrumental to intrinsic standpoint towards nature. It presents the basic principles of Deep Ecology, which proposes scientific insight into the interrelatedness of all systems of life on earth, an insight that argues with the idea of anthropocentrism, human-centeredness as a limited and misguided way of seeing and relating to life, to other people and the environment (Palmer 2003; Zimmerman, 1989). It objects to the common view, in which people are superior to other non-human beings, which they can use, utilize or kill according to their economic-technological needs or interests. This philosophy acknowledges the inherent value of all life forms comprising humans, animals, plants, rivers, mountains,

etc., claiming that all should be treated with equal honor and respect. The philosophy emphasizes the physical-emotional and spiritual interdependence that humans and non-humans share and the unavoidability of fate and future common to all of them (Drengson, 2005; Seed et al., 1988). The term 'self realization' conceptualized by Naess, calls the individual to emerge from his/her 'psychological self' and from his/her limited ego and encompass greater wholes: animals, plants and landscapes (Harding, 2005, Macy, 2005a; Seed, 2005). This connection with nature stands against the modern-individualistic perspective (and mode of being) which address the person as an individual separated from others. According to Naess, this deeper connection to others may be achieved through basic identification with non-humans, a connection that can help a person develop a wider 'ecological self'. This new form of 'self' helps people get in touch with the wider, cosmic knowledge that can teach them more than any other scientific paradigm (Zimmerman, 2005). Macy, another leading Deep Ecologist, related to the 'ecological self' as an option to expand common 'person to person' relationships into a wider cosmic context. She claimed that through this connection, a person can connect to all live beings and feel part of the larger community, the one of all beings (Macy, 2005b). In order to help people expand their anthropocentric way of being, Macy and Seed co-founded a series of workshops titled 'The Council of All Beings' (Seed et al., 1988; Macy, 2005b). According to Macy, the experiential workshops help people around the world to feel the interdependence they share with all life forms, as they get in touch with the pain and grief caused by the modern man and technology. During this ritual, using imagination and physicality, people connect to 'beings' (plants, animals, landscapes and natural phenomena) and voice out their unheard pain and anger. This spiritual-emotional and physical connection allows participants to feel a deep spiritual experience, as they engage with ancient, universal wisdom and spontaneity and reach a deep feeling of belonging (Macy, 2005b). This broader way of addressing the human - nature relationship opens philosophical-ecological questions which call not only for alternative environmental policy making, but also for a wider sense of collective justice and responsibility (Drengson, 2005). The innovation of Deep Ecology may be that it offers a different perspective for relating to the environmental crisis, one that is not 'shallow' and looks only at the immediate effects of the environmental crisis (symptoms) but that relates to it within wider social and human causes (Des Jardins, 2001). As Des Jardins puts it

(2001: 213-124) 'a cure for the crisis can come only with a radical change in our philosophical outlook. This change involves both a personal and cultural transformation and would affect basic economic and ideological structures. In short, we need to change ourselves as individuals and as a culture. This change is not a creation of something new but a reawakening of something very old. It involves the cultivation of an 'ecological consciousness' (Des Jardins, 2001: 213-124). He also says that 'Deep Ecology attempts to work out an alternative philosophical worldview that is holistic and not human-centered' (Des Jardins, 2001: 214). It would seem that Deep Ecology relates to wide questions such as diversity, holism, interdependence and relationships. As such it relates to questions of metaphysics and ontology (Des Jardins 2001). This view is presented by Des Jardins (2001) who says that: 'Deep Ecology traces the course of many of our problems to the metaphysics pre-supposed by the dominant philosophy of modern industrial society. The transition involves a shift into an alterative worldview that takes its inspiration from ecology. Deep Ecology is concerned with a metaphysical ecology rather than a scientific one' (Des Jardins, 2001: 218). Relating to this perspective, Des Jardins (2001) goes on to say that 'there are no individuals apart from or distinct from relationships within a system, a 'total field'. Human 'nature' is inseparable from nature. Viewing human beings as individuals is how the dominant worldview has understood humanity and has broken up reality, but it is a dangerous and misleading metaphysics' (Des Jardins, 2001: 218-219).

As a radical philosophy that offers alternative standpoints, Deep Ecology has been criticized for its extremeness. One of these criticisms questions the way in which an alternative which is so extreme and far from the common worldview can be explained. Other criticism questions the implications of the philosophy in practice (Des Jardins, 2001).

On the concrete level, it seems that Deep Ecology is a kind of a social-political-environmental movement whose members agree and act upon the eight Deep Ecology principles, formulated and presented by Naess in 1972 (Harding, 2005). Exploring the impact of the Deep Ecology philosophy, it seems it was not (and still is not) taken into much consideration when formulating environmental and social policies. Nevertheless, it seems that it slowly filters through the higher education system, as it is being taught in different universities around the world and is included

in books and articles about environmental ethics and social ecology (Des Jardins, 2001; Harding, 1985; Zimmerman, 1989).

The elements of Deep Ecology listed below are particularly relevant to Nature Therapy:

1. The attitude by which the word 'nature' relates to all beings: human and non-human life forms - plants, animals, natural phenomena and landscapes (rivers, deserts, mountains...).
2. The concept of interconnectedness and interdependence between humans and nature.
3. The option of using imaginative-physical, experiential work with nature, as a means of getting in touch with 'beings', as a way to connect people to a 'wider', cosmic consciousness, to develop their spontaneity, spirituality and feeling of belonging to something bigger than themselves.
4. Relating to nature as an intrinsic value.
5. Relating to spiritual and metaphysical perspectives and not only to scientific ones.

Social Ecology and Ecofeminism

Social Ecology is primarily associated with the work of Murray Bookchin, while Ecofeminism includes a variety of perspectives that have been developed by different individuals (Des Jardins, 2001). Social Ecology and Ecofeminism both look to society to find the underlying causes of the environmental crisis. They see a connection between ecological destruction and social problems, arguing that both come from patterns of social injustice, control, domination and hierarchy. Bookchin summarizes her view saying 'the very notion of the domination of nature by man (deliberately using the gender word 'man') stems from a very real domination of human by human' (in Des Jardins, 2001). Rosemary Radford, one of the pioneers of Ecofeminism, offers her parallel but different view, saying 'women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination' (in Des

Jardins, 2001). In these views ecological destruction is understood as one form of human domination. Both theories argue that in order to more fully understand the reason and process of the ecological crisis we must first understand more general patterns of human domination. Changing these patterns will help form a model of social justice, from which nature and the relationship with nature will also gain. Social Ecology relates mainly to social practices involving racism, sexism, class structures and private ownership. It relates to wide concepts of justice in which human freedom is understood as the absence of external control and psychological manipulation (Des Jardins, 2001). In contrast, Ecofeminism relates to the oppression of women as a principle form of social domination. It champions environmental goals alongside those related to ending the oppression of women. This is one of many reasons why many Ecofeminists believe that the goals of their movement are close to those of environmental movement, and as such can work together and collaborate. Relating to this, they believe in nature's intrinsic value and reject the common standpoints used in environmental ethics emphasizing the importance of human reason and objectivity. In contrast, as Palmer (2003) puts it: 'they suggest that environmental ethics can include emotional and subjective elements and that they can be built on relationships of *care* between humans and non-humans and the particular environments in which they are located' (Palmer, 2003:19). This does not mean that reason should be abandoned altogether; but rather, as Plumwood argues, reason should 'find a form which encourages sensitivity to the conditions under which we exist on the earth...and enable us to acknowledge our debt to the sustaining others of the earth' (Palmer, 2003:19). Warren also urges that 'felt sensitivity' should become part of environmental ethics, a sensitivity that recognises the fundamental, essential nature of human relationship with others. The language of relationship resists the kind of incorporation into the extended self for which Ecofeminists criticise Deep Ecology; it allows for the existence of difference. Simultaneously, it makes *relationships*, rather than separate isolated individuals, manifesting particular valuable qualities, central to ethical decision-making (Palmer, 2003).

It seems that Social Ecology and Ecofeminism are more philosophies with social-political-environmental agendas than theories that had been articulated into an academic format or discipline. Presenting these differences between Deep Ecology,

Ecofeminism and Social Ecology provides a glimpse of just how diverse views about environmental ethics can be...

It appears that the main connection between Ecofeminism and NT relates to the 'feminine and romantic' relationship with nature, and its intrinsic value, as well as to the place they allocate to non-rational and non-linear ways of thinking. This also relates to Ecofeminism's pluralistic attitude that acknowledges subjectivity and creativity.

2.2.4 Ecopsychology

In many ways it seems that Ecopsychology emerged from the psycho-social-ecological philosophy developed by Deep Ecology (Rust, 2005), to find the connection between the restoration of nature and personal healing. Ecopsychology focuses on the psychological aspects of the human – nature relationship and looks into the process of separation and detachment from nature, while exploring the emotional, spiritual and physical price people pay as a result of this process (Sevilla, 2006; Totton, 2003). Rust, (2005) a Jungian analyst and Ecopsychologist claims that therapy and counseling have developed within a western worldview that separates self from body, soul and land. It has done some great work with restoring relationships with ourselves and other humans, but has not taken into account our relationships with the 'larger than self'- the environment around us. Rust claims that a big part of our distress originates in our imagined separation from nature, and the planetary crisis that has resulted from that. Working with women with eating disorders, she claims that in the same way that western culture domesticated the wild and denigrated the land, so do these women try to cope with pain of early trauma by domination and control of their bodies (Rust, 2005).

Glendinning relates to the personal cost of this separation from nature saying that '*we are all part of the organism of the earth... when we do not acknowledge this connectedness... we become lost and paralyzed*' Glendinning (1994, in Totton, 2003:17). Relating to these standpoints, Ecopsychology questions the common psychodynamic/psychological approach that focuses on human, person to person interactions, while excluding interaction with the non-human world (Totton, 2003). Ecopsychology invites therapists to extend the traditional anthropocentric and

individualistic approach, and widen it into a larger context – including 'non-human nature' and contact with it as part of interaction with the 'self'. Roszak (2005), one of the pioneers of Ecopsychology, claims that *'there is more to know about the self, or rather more self to know, than our personal history reveals. Making a personality, the task that Jung called 'individuation', may be the adventure of a lifetime, but, every person's lifetime is anchored within a greater, universal lifetime'*. Rust (2005:13) calls upon people to restore their relationship with nature saying that *'Nature is a potent healer, a place for body and soul to return to source'*. In a similar way, Macy talks about her experiences with 'The Council of All Beings' workshops and Grut describes experiences from her work with victims of torture *'Reconnection with nature enables a reconstruction of shatteredness, so that individuals can regain that sense of wholeness they feel they have lost'* (2002, in Totton, 2003).

A similar attitude is expressed by King saying 'There is no point in liberating people if the planet cannot sustain liberated lives, or in saving the planet by disregarding the preciousness of human existence not only to ourselves but to the rest of life on earth' (King 1990: 121).

As Ecopsychology has not yet developed an articulated therapeutic framework, nor carried out clinical research, it is not clear whether it aims to be a form of therapy, an ecological approach or a kind of political movement, or, perhaps a combination of the three (Sevilla, 2006; Totton, 2003). Nevertheless, it upholds a clear philosophical-social-environmental claim that some misfortunes of people in urban environments are connected and even caused by the alienation from nature and the 'side effects' of a modern and technological life style. This perspective is highlighted by Totton, when he asserts that *'some of the distress and neurosis we see in our practice (psychotherapy) seems to stem from a lack of grounding in nature, the stresses of an urban lifestyle where alienated labour couples with compulsive consumption'* (Totton, 2003: 14).

Another aspect of Ecopsychology relates to the way in which it aims to make room for painful personal stories that connect to similar stories of loss of habitat and landscape. This attitude, first developed in Macy's workshops 'The Council of All Beings', is further developed by other Ecopsychologists who see the connection

between the loss of wild places and the loss of personal (wild and gentle) aspects (Rust, 2005).

Relating to the context of this Ph.D. it seems that Ecopsychology provides an eco-socio-psycho philosophy, which seeks to make a connection between psychotherapy and nature. It provides a network for professionals who come from different disciplines and have similar ideas and feelings about the connection between humans and nature, and, furthermore it creates grounds for the development of such a framework. From correspondence in the Ecopsychology network (the Ecology-Psychology network: ecology-psychology@jiscmail.ac.uk) and critique of this Ph.D. from Ecopsychologists like John Scull (Appendix 2.4), the field of Ecopsychology still appears to be questioning its identity and purpose: what is the deep meaning of the word 'psychology' within 'Ecopsychology' and what is the deep meaning of the connection between the two? Does Ecopsychology seek to be part of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the APA) and the clinical and psychiatric institution and how what implications does this have for its further development and application? Does it come only from an intrinsic position towards nature and how does such an approach relate to practice?

In reference to this Ph.D. these seem to be parallel questions that resonate both with the development of theory and its applications in practice.

2.2.5 Seeking Reconnection: Body and Mind, Person and Community, People and Nature

The previous review illustrated the evolution of human - nature relationships, from the period when people lived in communities in nature to the time when most live a capitalistic and individualistic life style in urban environments. It highlighted different attitudes towards nature and the connection between them to wider social-psychological processes and worldviews. Relating to this context, while seeking to place Nature Therapy within a larger psychological context, this subchapter will explore several pre-assumptions underlying the framework that this Ph.D. seeks to develop. It will connect several (post-modern) psychological-social concepts with Deep Ecology and ecopsychological thinking that was presented previously. It will

illustrate ways in which the current Ph.D. and the framework it develops can add and contribute to people's well being and to the field of psychotherapy.

In order to explore the relationship between the context of this work and the wider field of psychotherapy, it seems appropriate to start with an exploration of a few of the social processes that led to the emergence of Deep Ecology and Ecopsychology in the middle of the 20th century. The exploration relates to the period of the technological revolution and the 'invention' of science, which had a direct influence on the previous style of living, as it pushed aside traditional, religious and community ways of being and living (Berger, Berger and Kellner, 1974; McLeod, 1997). It aims at studying the healing aspects which may exist in the restoration of this elementary relationship and presenting ways in which it can be recreated (Roszak, 2001, Totton, 2003). This transition had a direct impact on people's coping mechanisms as the traditional community and religious-spiritual ways of dealing with misfortune, grief and sickness were questioned and doubted by the 'new form' of 'knowledge' called science (McLeod, 1997; West, 2000). As such, this 'new' scientific way of relating to the world asked to replace the 'old religious system' offering a linear way of explaining personal and natural phenomena such as illness, suffering and death. This process was part of a transition into an individualistic and capitalistic way of living, as people moved away from their original communities and heritage into the cities. Losing the religious, spiritual and communal way of dealing with stress, people looked for alternative 'scientific' ways to make sense and meaning of life events (McLeod, 1997; West, 2000). This process was encouraged by governments, as it transferred the authority over mental health issues from the church to medical institutions transmuting 'spiritual problems' into 'medical problems' (West, 2000). The development was correlated with another process which is described by McLeod (1997):

'The other central aspect of the modern concept of the person is the sense of the person as a 'mechanism', having an important attachment to rationality, control and abolition of risk... Behind all religious stories is an encompassing macro-narrative of how the individual is ultimately subject to the will and guidance of a greater power. Behind all scientific theories is a macro-narrative of prediction and control: science makes it possible for human beings to be the masters of the universe' (McLeod, 1997: 4-5).

This fast evolutionary process, correlated with the growing culture of consumption, moved people away from their previous, collective religious identity, without providing them a with good-enough alternative that could answer basic existential, spiritual and emotional questions. Rust, a Jungian analyst and Ecopsychologist, claims that the lack of sufficient love, and emotional and embodied nourishing, can create a basic sense of hunger and need that can lead people to look for its external and artificial fulfillment through growing consumerism (Rust, 2005). These cultural processes provided a platform for Freud's invention of psychoanalysis, a theory aiming at explaining these issues in a scientific and rational paradigm (McLeod, 1997). The growing psychoanalytic framework criticized religious and mystical ways of working, as it created a theoretical foundation based on biology and modern medicine. It is important to point out that despite Freud's criticism of religion and spirituality (Al-Krena, 1999; West, 2002) he borrowed some of their ecstatic techniques, and they were formulated into medical relationships between client and doctor.

As psychological and psychotherapeutic theory was developed, more and more terms relating to the 'self' were conceptualized. These terms focused on the 'person in relationship' context as opposed to the previous 'person in community' perspective (McLeod, 1997; Rust, 2005; Totton, 2003). This transition may explain the common psychological attitude presented in many psychological theories: placing the person-to-person relationship in the centre of the therapeutic act, and working through concepts such as identification, transference and counter-transference. Despite this 'psychological answer', it seemed that the decline in the position of family, traditional, spiritual and community ways of living, particularly in the post-war middle classes, led to the general sense of alienation and a sense of an 'empty self' (Cushman, 1990; McLeod, 1997; West, 2000). Cushman writes about this issue saying that:

'It is a self that seeks the experience of being continually filled up by consuming goods... politicians... and empathic therapists in an attempt to combat the growing alienation and fragmentation of the era... Unfortunately many psychotherapy theories attempt to treat the

'modern self' by reinforcing the very qualities of the 'self' that have initially caused the problem: its autonomous, bounded, masterful nature' (Cushman, 1990: 600-601).

It seems that one of the qualities of this post-modern society relates to the ability of the person to hold several 'true' life stories at the same time; moving more freely between different roles and social statuses. Nevertheless, it seems that this quality also contains the fragility of an era in which an individual may not be known by any person or group as a consistent whole. Rather s/he experiences himself or herself as of different 'selves' in different setting (McLeod, 1997). This experience may lead to a 'fragmented or saturated self' including difficult feeling of loneliness and disconnection, which may lead to deep psychological difficulties and psychiatric illness (Gergen, 1991; West, 2000). These post-modern psychological concepts have much in common with Ecopsychology and with the Deep Ecology philosophy presented in the previous subchapter.

2.2.6 Science's Limited Ability to Explain Complex Human Experiences

The fact that science and technology have not yet managed to find the answer to all life's misfortunes, including medicine for illnesses, resolution for poverty and answers to spiritual and emotional questions, may also explain the reason why psychology has difficulty in providing 'complete' answers to the variety of people's psychological and spiritual needs. Relating to this process, West, who wrote intensively about spirituality and psychotherapy, has observed that: *'...in the twentieth century of World War and Holocaust, there is less confidence expressed in science as a solution to human problems'* (West, 2000: 19). In addition, it seems that the development of post-modern thought has encouraged people to move away from their belief in the objective and from the legitimization of meta-narratives (Kvale, 1992). This perspective goes together with McLeod's argument that the post-modern impulse is to strip therapy from its scientific knowledge, and to reveal its core as an arena for telling personal stories (McLeod, 1997). Exploring this process, it does not seem surprising that more and more people are engaged with spirituality as they seek different and additional ways to find answers to their basic questions. This process can also explain the 'import' of oriental philosophies from the east to the Western world,

such as different meditation techniques, traditional medicines and styles of housing design which are being integrated into modern life. As this process penetrates all life activities, the concept of mind-body relationship and spirituality slowly enters the field of psychotherapy, influencing it in different ways and forms (West 2000, 2004). Yet, can this process be part of the same fragmented self? Can it be the same kind of search to satisfy the 'empty self', looking for answers in a remote culture whose values are embedded in its own origin and ancient heritage? What can answer this legitimate deeper and/or spiritual need? What elements have remained here all along and can help people reconnect mind-body, soul and spirit, self and other?

Spiritual and Transpersonal Perspectives

The previews section suggested that mainstream psychology approaches have a limited ability to answer some of the spiritual questions that people hold. It claimed that a scientific outlook narrows down these spiritual and transpersonal dimensions that may hold the answers to some of these questions. It seems as if these spiritual aspects are not commonly integrated into mainstream psychotherapeutic practices. Plotkin, who developed his own way of incorporating the transpersonal into his work, says: 'as a psychologist, I've found my clients' discontents are often rooted in an unmet longing for wildness, mystery and meaningful engagement with the world. Psychotherapy's traditional methods, regulated relationships, and confined offices are inadequate to address this craving for the untamed terrain of the soul (Plotkin, 2003:1). It seems as if despite the fast tempo of modern society, its secular, capitalistic and individualistic ways of living and its distancing from nature, people are still in search of the beyond... of something sacred and mystical that can help them find higher meanings and reconnect to things which are above... psychotherapy may need to include something extra (Berger & McLoed, 2006; West 2000). Rowan, who wrote extensively about the 'transpersonal', claims that these elements are present in many ways and forms. He says that 'the transpersonal dimension is just a part of being human: it may be or may not take a religious form; it may or may not take a philosophic form; it may or may not take an interpersonal form. But it always puts us in touch in some way with the sacred, the numinous, the holy, the soul and spirit, the divine' (Rowan, 2005:1).

Transpersonal Psychology can be seen as bridge between psychotherapy and spirituality, 'going beyond' to see humans as intuitive, mystical, psychic and spiritual (Davis, 1998; West, 2000; Rowan, 2005). According to Davis (1998), Transpersonal Psychology is 'an attempt to bring together a full range of human experience into the discourse of psychology. TP focuses on self-transcendence and mystical states of consciousness, as they are understood within a psychological framework' (Davis 1998:5). Relating to the concepts of self-transcendence, Davis claims that TP 'relates to states of consciousness in which the sense of self is expanded beyond the ordinary boundaries, identifications and self images of the individual personality, and reflects a fundamental connection, harmony, or unity with others and the world' (Davis, 1998:5). In its integration of ideas and concepts from different theoreticians, TP offers a way to help clients contact their 'higher selves' and fill some of the gaps presented earlier (West, 2000). Jung was the first to use the word transpersonal with reference to myths and symbols and their connection with the collective unconscious. He said that 'we must distinguish between a personal unconscious and an impersonal or transpersonal unconscious. We speak of the latter also as the collective unconscious, because it is detached from anything personal and is entirely universal' (Jung, in Rowan, 2005). Jung's idea of archetypes, reflecting universal human modes of experience and behavior was a pioneer idea that supported the development of TP (Rowan, 2005). Grof, who studied the therapeutic impacts of the drug LSD, spoke of the therapeutic potential of the mystical and religious dimension of LSD, and of the therapeutic power of peak experiences. He defined transpersonal experiences as an experience involving an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond the usual ego boundaries and the limitations of time and space (Rowen, 2005). Grof, (relating to his research on LSD) highlighted the potential of hallucinatory experiences and the range of transpersonal dimensions they can open, some of which relate also to identification with animals, plants and the entire physical universe (Rowan 2005).

Maslow was the thinker who insisted that peak experiences held the key to spiritual realms. During his research, he noted that self-actualizing people often had experiences very much like those that mystics had reported in the past. He claimed that there is an 'inner core' whose acceptance is linked with the process of self-actualizing. He believed that 'being states' and peak experiences can help people to get in touch with this core. Relating to this, Rowan says 'if we want to know what self-

actualizing is, go to the peak experience, go to the experience of being' (Rowan, 2005:45). Wilber, another key thinker of the transpersonal, suggests that beyond the stage of body-mind integration which he regards as the highest development reached by secular western therapy, the spiritual realm remains to be experienced. He divides these levels into three levels: psychic, subtle and causal. Beyond them is the ultimate level, which according to his view, includes all experience. Wilber believes that people can develop to a point where they actually live at such a level, rather than merely 'peeking' at it (West, 2000). This short review includes some of the basic concepts that underpin Transpersonal Psychology, an approach that seeks to broaden classic psychological discourse; extending it to additional spiritual and mystical dimensions. Using varied activities such as active imagination, visualization, dream work, meditation, ritual and other experiences that involve the mind-body-soul-spirit, TP seeks to answer some of the spiritual gaps and/or lacks that mainstream psychotherapy includes (Davis, 2004; Rowan, 2005).

To return to the context of this Ph.D., a basic question emerges: Is it possible that nature and that contact with nature can add to this transpersonal dimension and can it expand it?

Davis, in the article "Transpersonal Dimensions of Ecopsychology" claims that spirituality has been part of Deep ecology and Ecopsychology from their very beginning.

He relates to his relationship with nature as the 'second aspect' of his spiritual path (Davis, 1998). Adding to existing literature that highlights nature's ability to relax, restore and focus peoples' attention (REF), he highlights nature's potential to offer peak and ecstatic experiences. He claims that this is one of the main attractions of people to spending time in nature and taking part in wilderness activities. Relating to this potential, he says 'the wilderness inspires feelings of awe and wonder, and one's intimate contact with this environment leads to thoughts about spiritual meanings and eternal processes (Davis, 1998: 3). He also highlights nature's potential in connecting people with a sense of flow and compatibility, as well as to a sense of oneness with nature. Relating to non-duality as a core concept in Transpersonal Psychology, i.e. the recognition that each part (e.g., each person) is fundamentally and ultimately a part of the whole (the cosmos), he claims that nature and the relationship with nature can make an important contribution to the field. Relating to the connection between TP

and Ecopsychology, he claims that as Ecopsychology deals with people's relationship with nature and the 'world beyond', and as it relates to concepts such as interconnectedness, oneness and non-duality as basic parts of its discourse, it is directly connected to TP. This relates also to concepts such as the 'ecological self' that seeks to expand the 'self's' traditional boundary to a cosmic and ecological one. It also relates to Macy's 'Council of all Being', which included (and probably was based on) identifications and connections with (spirits of) animals, plants and the entire physical universe.

Highlighting nature's transpersonal potential also highlights the question: in what specific ways can the relationship with nature be used to restore these holistic elements and in what ways could it be integrated and used in psychotherapy?

2.2.7 From Questions to Construction

This thesis offers a way to explore the above questions, seeking to construct a framework that relates to (and perhaps answers) them. Integrating elements from existing psychological theories (such as Art and Drama Therapies, Gestalt, Narrative Approach and Transpersonal Psychology), elements from Shamanism and Ecopsychology, together with the therapeutic aspects of nature (Abram, 1996; Berger, 2003, 2004; Beringer & Martin, 2003; Davis, 1998, 2004; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003), it generates a theory and framework which contributes to the existing body of knowledge. It explores the ways in which nature and the relationship with nature can add to the mainstream psychological framework, extending not only its physical place of performance, as it moves from a static and closed environment into the dynamic and open natural environment, but relating to it in a way that expands the 'person to person' discourse, by opening it up to the non-human and larger-than-self.

One of the basic pre-assumptions of this work relates to the correlation between the process of distancing from nature and the distancing from religion, community and traditional ways of living and healing. This Ph.D. will present an innovative framework that will try to re-engage human experience with nature, and thus help people re-establish their spiritual connection with themselves, with others and with the cosmos. The thesis will present a framework that seeks to extend mainstream psychological approaches, by providing a theory that combines the

personal, interpersonal and transpersonal under one theoretical and practical umbrella. This theory will develop non-verbal and creative intervention strategies, which could help people not only to work on psychological issues but also to engage and broaden their intuitive, spiritual, social and meta-physical abilities to enable support for their overall coping mechanisms and well-being. In addition, this experiential theory, once developed, can people with verbal and/or cognitive difficulties a chance to do therapy in a place which is beyond words...

2.3 Incorporating Nature into Therapy: Key Themes

This section presents the basic theoretical foundation of this thesis. Providing an outline of some of the key ideas, themes and methods that comprise existing nature-oriented therapeutic approaches, it provides some of the fundamental building blocks for the construction of the Nature Therapy framework that will be presented in this Ph.D.

Some parts of this section have been published in an article in the 'Journal of Systemic Therapies', written in collaboration with Prof. John McLeod: (*Publication details*: Berger, R. and McLeod, J. (2006). Incorporating Nature into Therapy: A Framework for Practice. *Journal of Systemic Therapy*, 25 (2), 80-94).

Theme 1. Nature has a powerful role to play in emotional, interpersonal and psychological healing and therapy. The concept of conducting transformative and healing work in nature is not new; it can be traced back to ancient times when people lived in communities in nature. In those days, Shamans would incorporate nature into the performance of rituals and into the overall framework of traditional medicine. These rituals, which can be viewed as an ancient form of therapy (Al-Krena, 1999; Grainer, 1995; Jennings, 1995 a,b; Jerome, 1993; Jones, 1996; Pendzik, 1994; West, 2004), were used to help people recover from illness, cope with the unknown, and make the transition from one status to another (Eliade, 1959; Evans, 1997; Hazan, 1992; Jennings, 1995; Megged, 1998; Turner, 1986). After the scientific revolution and the development of modern therapy, Erikson, one of Freud's leading students and an important theoretician in his own right, used the experiential encounter with nature not only for his own healing but also for his clients; he would send them to the

mountains as part of the process (Kinder, 2002). Years later, Adventure Therapy was developed by working outdoors with youth and adults having difficulties coping with boundaries and with authority (Garst, Scheider, and Baker, 2001; Kaly and Hessacker, 2003; Neill and Heubeck, 1998; Price and DeBever, 1998; Simpson and Gillis, 1998). It was also used in caring for children with special needs, families, anorexic women, and people suffering from psychiatric illness (Bandoroff, 2003; Burg, 2001; Crisp and O'Donnell, 1998; Richards et al., 2001; Roberts et al., 1998). Adventure Therapy usually approaches nature as a setting (location) and as a provider of challenges, in what constitutes a concrete and task-oriented process (Beringer and Martin, 2003; Itin, 1998; Richards and Smith, 2003; Ringer, 2003). In most cases, adventure therapy does not emphasize the emotional, metaphysical, and spiritual aspects of nature (Berger, 2003; Beringer & Martin, 2003). In recent years, however, due to the negative effects of some aspects of technological development upon various social and environmental processes, the relationship between human beings and nature has received more and more recognition (Roszak, 2001; Roszak, Gomes & Kanner, 1995; Totton, 2003). Many writers have suggested that the rupture between human communities and the natural world contributes to a lack of psychological well-being and ultimately to emotional problems and ill-health (Kuhn, 2001; Pilisuk and Joy, Plotkin 2003, 2001; Roszak, 2001; Roszak et al., 1995). The growing field of Ecopsychology reflects this attitude in its developing social-therapeutic-environmental philosophy, claiming that reconnection with nature is essential not only for the maintenance of the physical world (habitats, animals, plants, landscape and cultures) but also for people's well-being and happiness (Roszak, 2001; Roszak et al., 1995; Totton, 2003). Many writers have written about the therapeutic aspects of nature and contact with nature (Abram, 1996; Berger, 2004; Beringer & Martin, 2003; Davis, 1998; Naor, 1999; Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003).

Theme 2. Nature as a distinctive therapeutic setting, which introduces possibilities that are absent from therapeutic work conducted indoors. One of the basic concepts of Nature Therapy relates to the issue of nature as a therapeutic setting. Nature is a live and dynamic environment that is not under the control or ownership of either therapist or client. It is an open and independent space, which has existed before their arrival and will remain long after they depart from it (Berger, 2003). This

characteristic is quite different from an indoor setting which is usually owned by the therapist, who has furnished it for the purpose of seeing clients and doing therapy (Barkan, 2002). Choosing to relate to nature as a place in which to conduct therapy, prods the therapist into relating to these issues and creating a framework that will not only take these characteristics into account but will incorporate them into the therapist's therapeutic rationale. The building-a-home-in-nature method (Berger, 2004; Berger and McLeod, 2006; Appendix 3) implements the concept of nature as a therapeutic setting in a concrete embodied way, addressing it as a key point of reference, in an essentially non-verbal therapeutic process. Building-a-home-in-nature relates to the ancient concept of 'sacred space'. This concept goes back to the beginnings of civilization and can be found in most cultures. Its main function, in shamanistic and traditional medicine, was to create a space protected from the intrusion of evil forces (spirits) and to allow the performance of transformative rituals. In this respect 'sacred space' can be addressed as healing space par excellence (Eliade, 1959; Pendzik, 1994; Turner, 1986). Traditionally, psychotherapeutic discourse makes it seem as if the therapeutic process takes place in a vacuum. There is hardly any reference to the environment in which the process occurs (Pendzik, 1994). Over the last few decades, with the emergence of environmental psychology and other post-modern disciplines, more and more writers have become aware of the different influences that the environment has upon therapist-client transactions (Hall, 1976). It has become increasingly evident that the aesthetics of the surroundings affect the person's display of emotions (Maslow & Mintz, 1956), as well as an individual's social behavior (Barker, 1976; Hall, 1976; Orzek, 1987; Pendzik, 1994). Yet much of this evidence relates to indoor settings in urban environments, mainly built and controlled by human hands. This characteristic of nature-informed therapy may provide yet another powerful element as it broadens the perspective of the relationship with space and opens that relationship up to a much larger cosmic dialogue.

Theme 3. Ritual is a central element in nature-based therapeutic work. One of the central principles underlying much nature-based healing and therapeutic work has been the intentional creation of structured activities or rituals (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Plotkin, 2003). This mode of working originally relates to times when people lived in communities in nature. In those days, life was powerfully connected to nature,

as people depended directly on it for their physical, social, and spiritual existence. The attitude toward life was embedded in a strong sense of collectivity: the individual was part of a family, which was part of the tribe, which was part of nature, which was part of the universe. Each of these elements was connected to, embedded in, and interdependent on the other. A change in one spelled a change in all (Eliade, 1959; Megged, 1998; Turner, 1986). Religion was central to the maintenance of these communities, as it anchored beliefs and held moral and social systems in place (Hazan, 1992; Megged, 1998; Turner, 1986). Rituals played a strong role and were extremely important in giving people a sense of order and security, fostering a feeling of togetherness and providing a sense of control over the uncertainties of life. Ritual also had an essential social function in helping individuals move from one social stage to another (Eliade, 1959; Evans, 1997; Hazan, 1992; Jennings, 1995; Megged, 1998; Turner, 1986). The Shaman was the person responsible for the performance of these rituals, which not only aimed at helping individuals and the group, but also were important in protecting values, beliefs, and the lifestyles of the entire collective (Eliade, 1959; Megged, 1998). In this sense, the Shaman can be viewed as an ancient form of therapist (Grainer, 1995; Jennings, 1995b, 1998; Jones, 1996; West, 2000).

Theme 4: Using therapy to reconnect people and nature. Many Ecopsychological theorists emphasize the importance of the equilibrium between people and nature (Plotkin, 2003; section 2.2). They claim that the rupture between the two contributes to a lack of personal well-being, as well as the destruction of natural habitats and landscapes. Naess, and other Ecopsychologists who adhere to the Deep Ecology movement, claim that this attitude toward nature challenges the modern capitalistic lifestyle, in which the individual is perceived as a separate entity and not as part of a larger creation (Seed et al., 1988; Totton, 2003). Relating to this standpoint, it seems that nature-informed therapy offers a means of helping reconnect people and nature and hones the importance of this ancient human-nature alliance. One of the implications of this theme is the possibility that nature-based psychotherapy may facilitate the development of more environmentally-aware attitudes and behaviour.

Theme 5: The concept of 'nature'. It is important to acknowledge that any attempt to define the word 'nature' is a complex task. The Oxford Concise Dictionary gives the following definition:

1. The physical world, including plants, animals, the landscape, and natural phenomena, as opposed to humans or human creations.
2. The inherent qualities or characteristics of a person or thing.
3. A kind, sort, or class: *topics of a religious nature*.
4. Hereditary characteristics as an influence on or determinant of personality often contrasted with nature.

This range of meanings can also be seen also in Williams (1983), who argues that the concept of 'nature' encompasses three areas of meaning:

1. The essential quality and character of something.
2. The inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both.
3. The material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings (Williams 1983: 219).

In relation to the many varied meanings that the word 'nature' has in our culture and to the changes in meaning of this term over time, Sutton (2007) considers the word 'nature' to be the most complex word in our language. It seems that the attempt to define the term is not only a linguistic complexity, but that it actually echoes in wide philosophic and moral debates, touching on basic existential issues that relate to our place on this planet. Evernden (1992) argues that some aboriginal cultures lack an equivalent word to our word 'nature'. Bookchin (1993) suggests that we should avoid talking about 'nature' altogether, because the term emphasizes a sense of separation between humans, their surroundings and other natural objects (Evernden 1992). This standpoint matches most Ecopsychology literature arguing that this attitude, separating humans and nature, constitutes the centre of the environmental crisis and features in many of the current social and psychological misfortunes of our time (Rust 2005, Totton 2003 , Roszak 2005; McIntosh 2002).

It seems that the concept of 'nature' is too wide to have a single and/or simple definition and that perhaps this should not be attempted. Indeed, many writers in the fields of Ecopsychology and Deep Ecology try to avoid getting into this issue, i.e. defining nature. This is also largely true in the case of Adventure and Wilderness Therapy literature, relating to different influences that different environments have on practice. Here too, many writers try to avoid getting into a more specific debate. For example, Powch (1994) and Crisp (1998) define Wilderness Therapy by emphasizing the wilderness factor (separating it from Adventure Therapy which can take place also in urban environments and human-built rope courses) but do not define 'wilderness' or 'nature'. Harris (2008), in the introduction to his Ph.D., titled 'The Wisdom of the Body: Embodied Knowing in Eco-Paganism' says 'I conclude that it (the term 'nature') remains too vague and culturally loaded for this thesis'.

Relating to the context of the present Ph.D., a comprehensive linguistic and philosophical debate about 'what is nature' is similarly beyond the limitations of this thesis. Nevertheless it appears that the use of the word 'nature' within the 'Nature Therapy' approach needs to be addressed, in order to clarify some of the implications it can have on the practice. These issues relate to questions such as:

1. What is the meaning of the word as it is used in the phrase Nature Therapy?
2. What kind of nature and how much nature is needed for the practice of Nature Therapy?
3. What are the differentiations between therapy-in-nature (normal therapeutic practices and processes in a natural context, Adventure Therapy and Wilderness Therapy) and Nature Therapy?

Theme 6: The attitude towards nature – instrumental or intrinsic? Generally speaking, there are two main moral, perhaps ethical attitudes towards nature. The first, an instrumental standpoint values nature only in relation to its usefulness in terms of its human interests. The second, an intrinsic standpoint, values nature for itself and for its own right with no dependence on outside factors or its contribution to people (Des Jardins 2001; Holland & Rawles 1993; Palmer 2003). Many analysts argue that instrumentalism is the dominant environmental ethic of industrialized societies and a root cause of the environmental crisis, as well as the separation between people and

nature (Des Jardins, 2001; Roszak 2005; Totton, 2003). They would insist that a shift towards an environmental ethic that recognizes intrinsic value in nature is in order. Such an ethic will consider human beings as members of a wider ecological community, rather than merely managers of ecological resources

These two different attitudes are also expressed in the practice of Adventure Therapy and in the philosophies of Deep Ecology and Ecopsychology. The first, a task-oriented form of therapy that takes place in nature, relates to nature mainly as a backdrop and/or challenge- provider that is used to support the client's process (chapter 3). It seems, therefore, to relate to nature from an instrumental standpoint. The second - Deep Ecology and Ecopsychology - emphasizes the interconnection and interdependence that exist between people and nature and argues that the former 'person-centered' attitude might not only increase the split between people and nature, a split which can have negative effect on people's well- being and psychological health, but furthermore can encourage the culture of consumption and the environmental crisis that comes with it. Ecopsychology's intrinsic standpoint seeks to widen not only the therapeutic discourse but also the aim of 'therapy' using it as a vehicle to re-connect people and nature, and to change people's attitude towards the environment (section 2.2). Despite the fact that both disciplines/ approaches have a direct relation with nature, they highlight very different standpoints towards nature. One is intrinsic and the other instrumental. This question of the kind of environmental and ethical standpoint will underpin Nature Therapy is an important one and will be addressed throughout the thesis.

CHAPTER 3 - A REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT RESEARCH LITERATURE

As stated in Chapter 1, the overall aim of this thesis is the development of an approach to psychotherapy that makes effective use of the relationship between the person and the natural environment. An important strand of inquiry within this undertaking has been to critically analyse theory and research in cognate areas of practice and to examine the relevance of these bodies of knowledge for Nature Therapy. Critical reading of the relevant literature has continued throughout all of the stages of action research described in the following Chapters. In the present Chapter, an overview of this research is presented. The review focuses on two interfacing fields: Adventure Therapy (which also takes place in nature), and Drama Therapy (which has a creative orientation and makes use of rituals). Although it seems that the review should also have a section on Ecopsychology, it is not included due to insufficient research literature (A critical, theoretical and historical account of Ecopsychology is provided in Chapter 2.2). Within the research review presented in this Chapter, the goal has been to identify concepts and therapeutic interventions from Adventure Therapy and Drama Therapy that have been (a) supported by research and (b) are relevant to the purpose of developing Nature Therapy. The intention has not been to carry out a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of these therapies.

Although the fields of Adventure Therapy and Drama Therapy are both experiential and group-oriented, they address different populations, are set in different environments, and their theories have little common ground. For these reasons, the present review is carried out on each discipline separately, keeping their integration for the final section (see conclusions in this Chapter). Since this review relates to several therapeutic disciplines, it will cover each one of them briefly, relating only to work that has been published since 1998. The aim is to present some of the history of these disciplines, to outline their basic theoretical foundations, and to examine them with different populations and in different therapeutic contexts.

3.1 Adventure Therapy

Adventure Therapy has arisen from a mixture of learning and psychological theories. It borrows from theories comprising the field of Experiential Education (relating to the work of people such as Albert Bandura, John Dewey, Kurt Hahn and Kurt Lewin), and can be considered as a form of therapy that was developed from it (Davis, Berman & Capone 1994; Moote & Woodarski, 1997). As the field of Adventure Therapy is fairly wide and contains disagreements about its theoretical basis, different definitions can be found. Ringer (2003: 19-20) defines Adventure Therapy as follows:

"Activities involving the combination of physically and psychologically demanding outdoor activities and/or remote natural settings".

According to Gillis and Ringer, Adventure Therapy is a:

"Strategic combination of adventure activities with therapeutic change processes, with the goal of making changes in the lives of participants. Adventure provides the concrete, action-based, experiential medium for therapy. The specific activity used is (ideally) chosen to achieve a particular therapeutic goal" (Gillis & Ringer 1999, 29).

In recent years, Adventure Therapy has adjusted to the urban environment, building artificial challenge courses (Ringer, 2003). These courses, which operate side by side with Adventure Therapy centres in rural areas, seek to use the same concepts of challenge and fear, leaving nature outside the process. Consequently, an argument of the importance of the 'nature experience' has led to a distinction within this field and to the conceptualization and development of a parallel field entitled *Wilderness Therapy*. This school of therapy, according to Powch (1994), is enacted in the wilderness, and should incorporate these components:

"Confronting fear in some way, experiencing trust in the group, immediacy and concreteness of feedback in the wilderness environment, and the even-handedness of consequences of wilderness" (Powch, 1994: 11-27).

Crisp (1998: 56-74) has argued that Wilderness Therapy is based on two interventional formats:

(a) Wilderness-based camping, which entails establishing a base camp with minimal equipment in an isolated environment, and (b) expeditions, which consist of small groups moving from place to place in a self-sufficient manner using different modes such as back-packing, rafting, canoeing etc.

It is not easy to identify the underlying theoretical basis that supports Adventure Therapy (AT) interventions. A critical analysis of the core literature (Baldwin, Persing & Magnuson, 2004, Blanchard, 1993; Cason & Gillis, 1994; Hattie et al., 1997; Hovenlync, 2003; Wolfe and Samdahl 2005; Russell & Farnum, 2004) suggests that the field has not yet developed a clear and established psychological foundation and theory. Although that there several concepts that relate to the issue of challenge, such as "challenge by choice" and "adventure-misadventure" (Mortlock, 2000) and a few models that guide a wilderness process (Russell & Farnum, 2004), it still seems like the field needs to further develop this issue. For example: what is the reference point of the therapist? On what process should s/he base observations in order to deepen his/her understanding and to decide on further interventions? What is the place of 'relationships' within the process: between the facilitator and the group, among the group members and with nature? What are its ethical codes?

Although it is quite clear that the issue of challenge and overcoming challenge stands as a central concept in the field, most of the research done so far has hardly examined the meaning that different aspects of these concepts have upon different clients. Most of the research in AT uses quantitative approaches and focuses on measuring programme outcomes; there has been little attempt to develop concepts and articulate a relevant theory (Russell & Farnum 2004). Relating to this standpoint, more and more writers argue that AT research has difficulty answering the basic questions of how, what, when, where and who and therefore misses out important theoretical underpinnings (Baldwin, Persing & Magnuson 2004; Blanchard 1993; Hovenlync, 2003; Russell & Farnum, 2004; Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005). They say that despite all the positive outcome reports published on the effectiveness of AT programs, there is yet more understanding needed of the underlying process to be

conceptualized and developed. These voices argue that the current research strategies might create conflicting findings that can confuse theoretical structure and explanations of effectiveness. Relating to this, several leading AT writers began to call for research, and to expand their outcome-oriented research into theory-driven research (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000; Baldwin, Persing & Magnuson, 2004; Blanchard 1993; Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006; Russell & Farnum, 2004, Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005).

Wolfe and Samdahl (2005) have claimed that most AT theory and its basic concepts is based on assumptions that have not been examined or grounded in research. For example, two basic assumptions are that risk and challenge leads to positive outcomes, and that these benefits can be transferred to experiences outside the challenge course. These two beliefs are, in fact, integral to the design and implementation of challenge courses, and they clearly have had a significant impact on the nature of programming and research in this field. However, examination of the literature reveals that these beliefs have been accepted as foundational tenets, and have not been challenged or tested as to their veracity. As such, they are unexamined assumptions that should be articulated and scrutinized to see if (and how) they are influencing the practice and study of challenge courses (Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005). Offering a way to solve this issue by expanding the use of qualitative approaches, Wolfe & Samdahl (2005) argue that: "Simply adding open-ended questions to survey instruments or providing participants with end-of-program evaluations will not be sufficient; we must take the time to interview participants in order to understand their perceptions and experiences. By listening carefully to their stories, we will be better able to see our own beliefs and assumptions that had been invisible to us."

Another issue concerns the effectiveness of AT relates to the limited research it includes. From a meta-analysis made Cason and Gillis (1994), covering 99 studies, made in 25 year span of research, only 43 studies were found fit for analysis. This study reports that the limited amount of studies for their meta-analysis is proof of the limitations in the research in adventure programming.

Returning to the aims of this Ph.D. study, which explores the place of the natural setting in therapy, Adventure Therapy (except in the case of manufactured

sites) and Wilderness Therapy both use nature as their therapeutic setting. Both address nature as a space that allows interpersonal and behavioral learning, arising from the achievements of clients in overcoming challenges presented by the physical encounter with nature. Both approaches address nature as a 'backdrop to, or stage for adventure' (Beringer & Martin, 2003), which gives participants a chance to encounter and confront their own fears and to discover new and more efficient ways of coping with them. The therapeutic process thus focuses on the ways in which the client deals with the challenges and adventures in nature, and not directly with the relationship with nature. It also seems as if Adventure Therapy's literature hardly relates to the impact and influence of 'nature' upon the processes (Beringer & Martin, 2003).

It is also important to take into account the client groups who have been offered AT. It appears from the literature that most of Adventure Therapy work is conducted with people who have behavioral and/or authority and/or boundaries issues (Larson 2007; Mossman, 1998; Newes, 2004; Garst et al., 2001; Fischer & Atteh, 2001; Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Long, 2001; Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Price & DeBever, 1998; Simpson & Gillis, 1998; Whittington, 2006). The majority of the work is conducted with young people, coming from a background of juvenile delinquency or sexual offence; sexually abused youths or youths at risk (Garst et al., 2001; Fischer & Atteh, 2001; Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Larson, 2007; Long, 2001; Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Simpson & Gillis, 1998; Russell & Farnum, 2004; Whittington, 2006). Most of the work with adults is done with people who come from similar backgrounds: prisoners, people using drugs or being rehabilitated, and sex offenders – mainly men (Mossman, 1998; Price and DeBever, 1998). Some work has also been applied to women, with a feminine perspective, working mainly with females who suffer from eating disorders (Richards, 2001). There is very little evidence of therapeutic work taking place with other populations. A small number of articles exist, illustrating work done with families (Burg, 2001; Bendoroff, 2003), with people who suffer from psychiatric disorders (Blanchard, 1993; Crisp & O'Donnell, 1998; Eisenbeis, 2003; Roberts et al., 1998), with people that suffer from cancer (Sugerman, 2005) or spinal cord injury (Beringer, 2003).

Most Adventure Therapy work is conducted in remote and rural Adventure Therapy centres, while some wilderness-oriented work is performed in camps in the

wilderness (Crisp, 1998). There is also some ocean-oriented work that is conducted on boats (Kaly & Hessacker, 2003). Most of the programmes involve intensive work, at times for one day or weekend; others lasting several months (Bandoroff, 2003; Fischer & Atteh, 2001; Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Ward & Yoshino, 2007; Whittington, 2006). In most cases, the programme consists of adventure work in the centre, using rope and challenging, artificial obstacle courses, together with a few hours of activities such as canoeing, rafting and climbing, taking place in nature near the centre. Others include journeys into the wilderness, where participants are challenged by expeditions lasting from one day to several weeks. Most of the work is conducted in groups. There seems to be no documented evidence of any individual Adventure Therapy work. In most cases, the work takes place in remote centres, for which the participants leave their homes, or residential institutions, and come to the centre for the duration of the programme. Hence, relatively little Adventure Therapy work takes place within the everyday environment of the clients, in the environment and culture with which they are familiar.

The issue of systematic work, between the staff of home-institutions and the staff of Adventure Therapy centres, has hardly been addressed. In the few cases reported, in which such collaborations exist, they take place before the programme (Richards, 2001). The systematic work reported by Richard (2001) and Crisp (1998) highlights their absence and raises questions about their impact.

Much Adventure Therapy research has been designed around single case studies, using mixed qualitative and quantitative methods (Scheider & Baker, 2001). Other studies have used quantitative approaches and focused on the evaluation of programme efficacy. Hence, quantitative approaches and statistical scales are often used to prove the efficacy of different psychological scales, such as the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-2, or the Eating Disorder Inventory (Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Richards, 2001). Though these scales are used, there is very little meta-analysis work published (Cason & Gillis 1994; Neill, 2003). In most cases, the small sample, the use of non-standardized measurements and lack of control groups make it hard to determine the real efficacy of the programmes (Kaly & Hessacker, 2003). Although qualitative methods are also

used, most published research leaves out the participants' voices, overlooking important information that could be significant for learning about the elements of the therapy that might contribute to outcome. The few cases in which participants voices are heard, such as in Richard's (2001) feminist, practice-oriented research with women with eating disorders, Long's (2001) work with girls at risk, and Sugerman's (2005) study of female cancer survivors, highlights the lack of such work. These studies highlight the potential of qualitative approaches not only for their contribution to readers' understanding of the process, but for the further development of theory (Russell & Farnum, 2004).

Most Adventure Therapy research deals with work carried out on youths and adults with behavioral and/or self-esteem issues, with little evidence of research that conducted on other populations. It is important to emphasize that, since much Adventure Therapy takes place within educational settings, it is hard to distinguish between research that can be addressed as therapeutic research and that which can be addressed as educational research. Blanchard (1993) states that with all the importance placed upon Adventure Therapy as a therapeutic intervention, the research is restricted to cooperation and trust; barely examining the effect of outcomes on pathology. This complexity is also reflected in the fact that most Adventure Therapy articles are published in educational journals and not in psychological or clinical journals.

In summary, a number of conclusions can be drawn from this review of research into Adventure Therapy:

1. Adventure Therapy is an active, task-oriented, therapeutic-educational approach working with a problem-solving orientation. It takes place in nature, addressing it as a stage and supplier of materials for adventure activities. It is group-oriented; specializing in issues such as self-esteem, trust, communication and team-work skills, borders and authority. It works with mainly with youths and adults with behavioral and/or authority issues.
2. As Adventure Therapy is a young discipline, the research published on it is limited as yet. Most of this research uses quantitative approaches aimed at exploring program efficacy. Qualitative research is used less and therefore

hardly explores the therapeutic process and the meaning given by participants. Action research is hardly used. The small samples present in most cases and the lack of sufficient therapeutic–clinical research articles makes it difficult to determine the overall efficacy of the approach. Nevertheless, relating to the large numbers of existing programmes, Adventure Therapy seems effective with youth and people with border and authority issues.

3. It seems that the theoretical foundation of AT must be made more explicit and clear. The field stands to gain from such articulation and conceptualization of the therapeutic process.
4. It is not clear whether Adventure Therapy is a form of therapy, education, or some in-between form. This situation causes tension within the field and raises questions about its professionalism.

Returning to the context and aims of the present study, which aims at developing a therapeutic framework, it seems relevant to raise a number of matters that have remained vague, and perhaps need to be further explored. These matters relate to the theory and the practice of Adventure Therapy:

- a. What psychological–therapeutic theory underpins Adventure Therapy practice? What is the therapeutic process that underlines this approach and in what ways does it influence program construction? What are the concepts, methods of intervention or code of ethics that stand at its centre, and how do these influence the therapeutic relationship and design of intervention?
- b. How does the experience, and its meaning for participants, relate to the whole experience and to specific issues within it? What elements were meaningful and contributed to their therapeutic process and which were not? In what ways was this knowledge generated into theory development and how did it implement practice?

- c. What is nature's role in the process? Is it merely a setting and background for adventures and task-orientated interventions, or does it have additional roles, influences and functions? In case it does, how does this help implement theory development and the practice derived from it?
- d. What is the relationship between AT and environmental ethics and philosophy? Does it attempt to educate for nature conservation and sustainability? In what ways is this standpoint integrated into the theory and how does it implement practice and ethics?
- e. What specific elements in Adventure Therapy are effective (or ineffective) in achieving specific therapeutic goals?

The negligible quantity of research-based evidence in relation to these questions highlights the gap in knowledge that exists in the field.

3.2 Drama Therapy

Sue Jennings, one of the pioneers of Drama Therapy, has stated that Drama Therapy is a modern development of theatre and of traditional and shamanic ritual (Jennings, 1995; 1998). The profession of Drama Therapy evolved in Britain in the 1960s from drama in education, theatre in education and remedial drama. Influenced by radical ideas such as Grotowski's laboratory theatre and Peter Brook's experimentation with Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty', Sue Jennings began to use these ideas as she developed techniques that were used educationally in clinical fields, with adults and children with special needs (Meldrum 1995). By 1977, Drama Therapy was becoming known in the arts therapy world as an alternative to Psychodrama, when the Hertfordshire College of Art opened its first Drama Therapy training. The establishment of the field was celebrated with the elaboration of the British Institute of Drama Therapy in 1998 (Meldrum, 1995).

According to Jennings (1992), Drama Therapy involves the “*specific application of theatre structures and drama processes with a declared intention that is*

therapy" (Jennings, 1992: 229). Lahad, a leading figure in this growing field, defines it as a "*multi-modality of the art that manifests itself in the dramatic act*" (Lahad, 1995: 179). These definitions illustrate the centrality of the dramatic act to the Drama Therapy process. The definitions go together with the key elements of the discipline: story, myth, creative play, ritual and drama itself (Meldrum, 1995). On the basis of these basic dramatic principles, together with the integration of elements from developmental psychology, Jungian archetype theory, object-relations, and group dynamics and processes (Jennings 1995a), a number of key theoretical concepts have been assembled, to develop specific ways of working and evaluating the therapeutic process. The concepts, such as 'theatrical distance' (Jennings, 1998; Landy, 1996), 'the two realities' (Jennings, 1998) and 'role play' (Landy, 1996), have been incorporated into a number of approaches, such as the Embodiment–Projection–Role model (EPR) (Jennings, 1998), the Role method (Landy, 1996) and the Six-Piece-Story-Making method (Lahad, 1992). These have provided the field with an autonomous theoretical and practical foundation. In practice, since Drama Therapy is an integrative approach, it uses a variety of methods, such as Playback Theatre, Role Play, Psychodrama, Masks, Myths, Voice-work; Puppet Theatre, Story Making, Story Telling and others (Jennings, 1995b). Though there are many differences in the operation of the above-mentioned techniques, in practice, their major principles are similar, all being embedded within the overall concept of 'drama' and the dramatic act.

According to Jennings, Drama Therapy (DT) is an experiential therapeutic form that "may be applied in psychological and social models, but it is unique in its capacity to enter into the mythic and the ritual and therefore the metaphysical" (Jennings, 1995b: 211). Over the years, together with the growing need for evaluation, a number of assessment and evaluation methods have been designed, such as Jennings's EPR model and the Dramatic Structure of the Mind (Jennings, 1998), Landy's Role Model (Landy, 1993), and Johnson's Diagnostic Role-Playing Test (Johnson, 1998). These have provided the field with diagnostic and evaluation tools, based on the concepts of this art form. From the literature review, it appears that dramatic concepts, such as the Dramatic Act (Bernstein, 1978) and Role Play (Kelly, 1955) were used as assessment tools in social science long before the term Drama Therapy was accepted, or even used in a therapeutic sense (Pendzik, 2005). Over the

last thirty years, Drama Therapy has been taught in post-graduate academic trainings in the U.K, USA, Greece and Israel (Jennings, 1995b). The three to four years of training combines theory, methods and practice, theatre art and techniques, clinical theory and pathology. Trainee drama therapists carry out supervised clinical practice, as well as their own extended personal therapy (Jennings, 1995b). Once training requirements have been fulfilled, a Drama Therapist diploma is issued by the National Drama Therapists/Art Association (Jennings, 1995b). Together with the development of the field and its establishment as a recognized paramedical profession, a code of ethics and practice have been established by the Institute of Dramatherapy (U.K.), in order to maintain and further develop a high level of practice (Jennings, 1995b).

Examination of the relevant literature indicates that there is quite a wide gap between the highly established practice of Drama Therapy and its low profile in research (Meldrum, 1995b). Hence, due to the very small number of Drama Therapy research articles published since 2000 and in order to complete this literature review, the review has been extended into the broader fields of Art and Expressive Therapies. It appears that Drama Therapy and Art Therapy are widely used in clinical, educational, rehabilitative and community settings. They are in wide use with the general population: children, adults and the elderly who suffer from mental illness and psychiatric difficulties; work is conducted in psychiatric hospitals and day-care centres (Polak, 2000; Ram, 2005). It is also practiced in schools and kindergartens, as well as in hospitals and rehabilitation centres, where therapists work with people who are dealing with physical pain and illness (Bojner-Horwits, 2003; Greece, 2003). Art therapy is also employed in private clinics, with various kinds of populations, including children who have been sexually abused and people who are dealing with grief (Bannister, 2003; Bar-Yitzchak, 2002). Drama Therapy is also employed in the community, its creative and non-verbal character being used to promote a variety of goals (Jennings, 1995b).

In most cases Art and Drama Therapy sessions are conducted in a traditional manner, within home-based institutions and/or private and/or community clinics. Art and Drama therapists work in collaboration and dialogue with other professionals using expressive therapy as part of a systemic way of working. The work is carried out

both in individual and group settings, lasting between one hour to several hours or days. Although rituals have an important role in the Drama Therapy framework, and despite the important place nature has had in traditional rituals, Drama Therapy does not involve nature or the relationship with nature directly in the process. It usually takes place indoors, focusing on the personal drama-story and/or person to person relationship. It is interesting to note that though several of the field's pioneers claim that rituals and shamanism are the form's ancestors, Drama Therapy itself has left nature outside the process (Grainger, 1995; Jennings, 1998; Jones, 1996).

The Art therapies (drama, art, dance/movement and music) have been growing in popularity in practice, in clinical, educational and rehabilitative settings. They have established international post-graduate academic training programmes, held academic conferences, and published several books. Nevertheless, research in the field of art therapy, in general, and Drama Therapy in particular, is not widely established. Although there are a number of journals dedicated to the field, such as *Arts and Psychotherapy* (Elsevier; USA), *Dramatherapy* (The British Association for Drama therapists) and *Therapy through the Arts* (The Israeli Association of Creative and Expressive Therapies), there have been only a few "big" quantitative research articles published since 2000. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon may be the artistic origin and character of these fields, emphasizing their artistic orientation, which relates more to such matters as religion, intuition, spirituality and metaphysicality and less to scientific concepts or paradigms (Grainger, 1995; Jennings, 1995b). This way of addressing the field is also reflected in the lack of research modules in most of the postgraduate Drama Therapy training courses (Meldrum, 1995b) and in the small number of Ph.D.'s submitted.

Nevertheless, it seems that there is a growing understanding of the importance of Art Therapy research. Meldrum (1995b), Barham (2003), Dokter, (2000-2001) and others are trying to develop research in this field by encouraging more therapists to take part in it. Barham (1995) writes about the importance, potential and complexity of practice-based research, while Saunders and Saunders (2000) write about the potential that lies in quantitative, outcome-focused studies. Meldrum (1995b) argues that the field of Drama Therapy needs to develop its own research tools, of a type that

would suit its creative manner. She suggests that such special methods be developed out of Drama Therapy models, such as Lahad's Six-Piece-Story; creating techniques for use in the assessment of post-trauma and coping mechanisms. Hence, a number of standardized research measurements have been developed, like the PPAT test, which uses a drawing of a person picking an apple from a tree to evaluate the project's entries and outcomes (Gussak, 2004).

A review of research articles published since 2000 shows that most of the research is based on single-case studies, using qualitative methods (Bomjer-Horwits, Holmwood, 2005; Gussak, 2004; L'Etoile, 2002; Kruczek & Zigelbaum, 2004; Silverman & Marcionetti, 2004), and only a handful use quantitative measurements (Feniger-Schaal, 2003). No evidence of meta-analysis research was found. Research aimed at evaluating the impact of Art Therapy is conducted with most client groups, but its results are not clear. The phenomenon may be due to the small samples in most case studies, lack of control groups and/or the lack of suitable statistical measurements. It is important to mention that quite a few descriptive studies have been published, illustrating the therapeutic procedure and process from a narrative perspective (Bannister, 2003; Bar-Yitzchak, 2002; Berger, 2003, Greece, 2003; Holmwood, 2005; Novy, 2003; Polak, 2000; Ram, 2005). Exploring this phenomenon in perspective suggests that the field would benefit from more qualitative research that will give voice to the experiences participants and therapists, and quantitative research that could help examine programme outcomes and give them statistical validity.

This review of research into Drama Therapy and Art Therapy can be summarized in the following way:

1. Drama Therapy (like all art therapies) is a young, creatively and actively orientated therapeutic approach. Its theoretical foundations and working techniques are rooted in the concepts of theatre and the dramatic act, relating to the overall concept of creativity. This theory is published mainly in books and is mostly not grounded or examined in research. The form takes action indoors, in clinical, educational, rehabilitative and community settings. It works both with individual and groups. The field applies

equally to men, women, children, adults and the elderly, including those with special needs.

2. Drama Therapy has framed its own code of practice and ethics, as well as its own post-graduate training programmes.
3. Although Drama and Art therapy have developed their and established their own assessment methods, theoretical framework and intervention techniques, research still seems sparse. The survey of the literature suggests that it is mainly based on single-case studies. Most of these articles are descriptive and do not include evidence-based research. The few that do present evidence use mainly quantitative methods. Due to the small samples and the lack of control groups in most of these studies, conclusions are equivocal. The findings suggest that the use of more quantitative methods will support the development of further research, and encourage it to include the exploration of small samples.

3.3 Conclusions

It appears that the basic conclusion of this review relates to the limitations of Adventure Therapy's theoretical and research underpinnings. It would seem that its theoretical foundation needs further development: clear concepts, intervention methods and a code of ethics. Its attitude towards nature expresses mainly one dimension of this relationship, hardly relating to spiritual, emotional, symbolic, conceptual and meta-physical aspects that contact and relationship with nature can contain (Chapter 2.2 & 2.3). AT's methods focus on concrete, challenging and problem-solving approaches. This orientation would appear to be appropriate for specific populations, fitting specific objectives and depth of interventions. Adventure Therapy hardly works with people with special needs or populations whose verbal and cognitive abilities are low. Neither does it work much with the elderly or people dealing with grief, loss or trauma. Finally, AT research largely focuses on programme outcomes (effectiveness) and not on understanding the therapeutic process or theory

development. This attitude is reflected in the small number of qualitative studies of process factors in AT.

A contrasting set of conclusions relates to the field of Drama Therapy. Relating to the concept and techniques of shamanic ritual, Drama therapy seems to have articulated a well-developed framework. It includes concepts, intervention techniques, diagnostic tools and a code of ethics. However, as an indoor-oriented practice, it does not relate to nature in any way. It uses a variety of intervention techniques, combining both symbolic and concrete activities. DT does not limit itself to any specific population nor to specific therapeutic aims. Despite the conceptual richness of DT, it seems that this approach has barely generated any hard research. Most of their research includes single, descriptive case studies, without systemic analysis. This research does not focus on programme efficacy or outcome measurements.

In conclusion, although the literature on AT provides many examples of the use of nature as a setting, it does not offer much in terms of creating a more broad-based Nature Therapy. On the other hand, although DT takes place almost entirely within indoor settings, it has generated rich, theoretical literature that is relevant to Nature Therapy. Finally, neither of them has supported research that has involved the use of specific methods (e.g., questionnaires, interview schedules) that would appear to be particularly relevant to the current study -the development of a therapeutic framework for nature-oriented therapeutic praxis.

3.4 Aims of the Present Study

In light of the general discussion of relevant literature, in Chapters 2 and 3, the following aims and methods have been derived for this study:

This Ph.D. aims to articulate and develop an integrated, innovative, nature-oriented, therapeutic framework entitled Nature Therapy. It will therefore seek to articulate theory and intervention methods that will:

- A. Relate to the place of nature in the process.
- B. Develop creative, non-verbal intervention techniques that can be implemented in nature and in relationship to it.
- C. Expand the therapeutic discourse into transpersonal, spiritual and eco-psycho-social dimensions that provide illuminative understanding of the therapeutic process involving contact with nature.

The development of the framework will seek to expand nature-oriented therapeutic practices (such as Adventure and Wilderness Therapy) to include people with verbal and/or cognitive difficulties. The study will add to the psychotherapeutic body of knowledge and to the fields of Adventure Therapy, Drama Therapy and Ecopsychology in particular. It will aim to extend its theory, its intervention methods and its research strategies.

In order to achieve these aims the research will:

1. Implement methods that support theory development. Qualitative techniques will be used to explore different issues within therapeutic process, generating this new knowledge into the construction of new theory.
2. Implement Action Research strategies that incorporate inquiry into both theory and practice. By transferring academic knowledge into programme design and applying what is learned in these programmes to further developments of theory, it will improve the framework and practice of this field.
3. Adopt a reflexive standpoint: the researcher will use his/her pre-assumptions to further explore these assumptions, generate new concepts and frameworks and examine their impact upon varied populations and different settings.

CHAPTER 4 - METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This Chapter includes three main sections:

(4.1) **Introduction** – presenting the process which led to the specific choice of methodology for the study.

(4.2) **The Cycle of Action Research** – presenting the process the research underwent from the development of theory through its implementation in practice.

(4.3) **Research Procedures** – from the recruitment of participants to the analysis and writing process.

The aims of the Chapter are to provide a rationale for the methodological choices made in the design and conduct of the study as a whole, and to provide detailed information about the methods of data collection and analysis used in Chapters 5 and 6, which present empirical findings.

4.1.1 Introduction

In order to begin the Ph.D. process, it was necessary to identify an appropriate methodology for the study. A literature review was therefore carried out into Adventure Therapy, Art Therapy and Drama Therapy (see Chapter 3). A central purpose of the review was to examine the theory and methodologies used and to explore which methods would suit the current research. The review indicated that most of the research in these fields examined therapeutic outcomes, while paying little attention (if at all) to the process of therapy and even less to the development of theories or protocols for practice. Most of the research that was reviewed used quantitative methods as the main measurement (Fischer & Attah, 2001; I'Etoile, 2002; Glass & Benshoff, 2002; Gussak, 2004; Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Kruczer & Zagelbaum, 1998; Neill, 2003; Price & DeBever, 1998), with only a small number employing qualitative methods (Dokter, 2000-2001; Fengir-Schaal, 2003; Greece,

2003; Long, 2001; Simpson & Gillis, 1998) while only one study combined the two approaches (Garst et al., 2001).

This review did not result in any methods that were specifically designed for the construction of a theory and protocols for intervention, or methods that were specifically created for the exploration of nature's influence upon therapeutic process.

Exploring the ways in which these approaches to therapy (theories and interventions techniques) were formalized, it seemed that they were constructed from the experience of the practitioners who wrote them, without describing a systemic or analytic research process that underpinned their creation. This status may also explain why most of these theories are published in books which do not undergo a review process that underpins publications in academic journals (Grainer, 1995; Jennings, 1998; Jones, 1996; Lahad, 2002; Landy, 1996).

This process of reviewing the literature lead to some self-reflection on the question of a Ph.D. framework as the 'right' basis, best suited for developing and formulating a therapeutic approach grounded in the relationship with nature. In addition, awareness of the complexities which arise from my own position as a researcher, one trying to develop a theory parallel to his work (and involvement) as a therapist, supervisor and trainer, made it clear that methodological choices were crucial. I was also aware of the limitation of being the only researcher exploring a new theory (which meant it might be hard to find clients willing to take part in programmes and research) and without any (external) research funds. Last but not least, the harsh reviews I received for articles I tried to publish during 2003-2004 (in journals that publish mainly quantitative materials) strengthened earlier doubts and made me rethink about the engagement with research as a pathway to conceptualize the framework that interested me.

Not finding sufficient solutions in mainstream quantitative methods, and not identifying with their positivistic, empiric and 'objective' view of the world, I did discover qualitative approaches of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; Elliott et al., 1999; McLeod, 2002, 2003b; Reason, 1994, 1998; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Sabar,

2001; Stiles, 1993; West, 1996). I therefore extended my reading into these 'meaning making' methods, hoping to adopt their narrative standpoint for the construction of a theory.

4.1.2 From Quantitative to Qualitative Methods

Underlying the qualitative research tradition is a view that knowledge is not objective and is not constructed from universal laws, but is subjective and thus is personally and socially constructed. Elliott et al. (1999) provide a definition of qualitative research:

"The aim of qualitative research is to understand and represent the experiences and actions of people as they encounter, engage and live through situations... Qualitative research lends itself to understanding participants' perspectives, to defining phenomena in terms of experienced meanings and observed variations, and to develop theory from field work" (Elliott et al., 1999: 216).

McLeod offers a different definition:

"The purpose of (qualitative) research is to enhance knowledge, to enable us to know more about the way counseling and psychotherapy operate and how or why they are effective... The primary aim of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of how the world is constructed" (McLeod, 2002: 2).

Relating to my post-modern standpoint and to the constructionist and narrative orientation of this thesis, it seems that this standpoint not only supports my original aim but, furthermore, goes together with my personality and the ecopsychological philosophy that underpinned my entire Ph.D. In addition, it seemed that it provided a pathway in which I could use my own experience as well as participants' voices as a way to develop and formalize a theory. In this respect, it allowed me to incorporate my own perspective and experience as part as the process of inquiry, as this kind of personal engagement in the topic is essential for the qualitative process of 'meaning making' (McLeod, 2002; Morrow, 2005). This attitude also relates to the Elliott et al. perspective (1999), which claims that qualitative researchers accept that it is impossible to set aside one's own perspective totally and, as such should not claim to be objective. Furthermore, they believe that self-reflective attempts to 'bracket' existing theory and the researcher's own values allow readers to understand and

represent the informants' experiences and actions more adequately than would be possible otherwise.

Aiming to work through case studies, it was also encouraging to realize that qualitative research tends to use this method quite frequently, as it strives to explore the deeper meaning people give their experiences (Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006; Jenkin et al., 2006; Stiles, 1993; Robinson et al., 2005).

It was encouraging to becoming more familiar with qualitative methods. It made the option of using this type of research for the conceptualization and developing of a therapeutic framework possible. Yet, I had three unresolved questions:

1. What kind of method would allow me to bridge between the theoretical and practical sides in a way that would support the development of the first, while implementing and empowering the latter, using the work with clients to further develop the theory and vice versa?
2. What kind of method would allow me to use participants' voices for the conceptualization of a theory?
3. What kind of method would allow me to take in account and use my own experience in a way that would not only create trustworthiness but also help to develop the framework?

Reflecting upon the different qualitative methods that I was becoming familiar with through my reading, it seemed that a reflexive Action Research methodology combined with data analysis strategies adapted from Grounded Theory analysis would best suit the needs of the current work (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006; Jenkin et al., 2006; McLeod, 2002, 2003b; Reason, 1994; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Robinson et al., 2005).

4.1.3 Action Research

Action Research, as defined by Reason & Bradbury (2001: 1) is:

"a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in a pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally, the flourishing of individual persons and their communities."

Action Research aims to integrate theory and practice in a way that, according to Brydon-Miller et al. (2003: 15):

"goes beyond the notion that theory can inform practice, to a recognition that theory can and should be generated through practice, and that theory is only useful insofar as it is put in the service of a practice focused on achieving positive social change."

After all, as Kurt Lewin, one of Action Research's pioneers, who used this approach to generate his 'change theory' said: *"there is nothing so practical as a good theory"* (1951: 169).

The concepts of Action Research expressed by these definitions seemed eminently suitable to the aims and purposes of the current Ph.D. research.

4.1.4 Action Research and the Context of this Study

Acknowledging my background as a practitioner of therapy, supervising and teaching, and my current work, trying to develop a therapeutic approach, it seemed that this strategy would be best. It would enable me to use the new theory for the creation of therapeutic programmes, while the study of these programmes (and participants' experience of the programmes) would be used for further development of the theory, which, in turn, would be used to develop further programmes and so forth (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Gustavsen, 2001; Reason, 1994, 1998; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). A similar approach to Action Research was also used in previous studies such as in the Robinson, Carroll & Watson study with families coping with

cancer (2005), the Ditrano & Silverstein study in schools (2006) and the Jenkin, Koch & Kralik study of adults living with HIV (2006). All studied participants' experience as a basis for the construction of theories and interventions, which were fed back for further (and hopefully better) treatments. The examples above relate to studies that focused on specific client groups and interventions. A different approach of using Action Research can be seen in West's (2000) work, which studied the integration of spirituality and healing into psychotherapy practice. West examined the experience of counselors whose work included healing, as a way to generate a relevant theory (West, 1997). As such, his important contribution relates to the whole field of psychotherapy, producing a theory that can inform the design of training and supervision to help therapists incorporate the issue into their work with any kind of clients (and not necessarily with a specific population) (West 2000, 2004). As per this example of the two approaches of Action Research, the current Ph.D. seeks to integrate the two in a way that can be used both for the construction of a (wide) theory and for the further development of specific therapeutic interventions, training programmes and supervision.

Another strong link of this Ph.D. and Action Research exists in the socio-psycho-ecological philosophy that underpins the Nature Therapy approach and the ecological perspective espoused by some leading Action Researchers, such as Reason & Bradbury, who claimed that *"a participatory worldview places human persons and communities as part of their world – human and more than human – embodied in the world, co-creating their world."* (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 7). It seemed that the post-modern and social-constructivist standpoints which form the new theory are, in many ways, similar to and consistent with Reason & Bradbury's (2001) philosophy:

"To heal means to make whole: we can only understand our world as a whole if we are part of it; as soon as we attempt to stand outside, we divide and separate. In contrast, making whole necessarily implies participation: one characteristic of a participative worldview is that the individual person is restored to the circle of community and the human community to the context of the wider natural world". (2001: 11).

In addition, other useful features of Action Research methodology were that it highlighted a reflexive attitude on the part of the researcher, and acknowledged the importance of spontaneity, creativity and tacit knowledge (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Cutcliffe, 2003; Mann, 2005; Reason, 1988, 1998; Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

Similar to Reason's concept of the cycle of Action Research, working with a system that combines periods of practice with periods of reflection (Reason, 1998), a similar cycle was designed for the current study integrating trainings, facilitation, supervision, reflection, writing, trainings, facilitation, supervision, reflection. The details of this cycle can be found in Section 4.2.

4.1.5 Reflexivity

Many qualitative researchers (including Action Researchers) have written about the importance of reflexivity in qualitative research (Cutcliffe, 2003; Etherington, 2004; Hertz, 1997; Marshall, 2001; McLeod, 2002; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Rudolph et al., 2001; Steier, 1991). Similar to Cutcliffe's claim that "*qualitative research is a reflexive process, in that the researcher has an effect on the research and vice versa*" (2003: 136) and McLeod's claim that "*no competent qualitative research would doubt that a capacity for self-reflection is a necessary component of effective qualitative research*" (2002: 195) it seems that reflexivity is an essential part of any qualitative research. This standpoint, highlighting the importance of the researcher's awareness of his/her own process goes together with Hertz's (1997) claim that:

"(qualitative) researchers must become more aware of how their own positions and interests are imposed on all stages of the research process – from the questions they ask to those they ignore, from who they study to who they ignore, from problem formation to analysis representation, and writing – in order to produce less distorted accounts of the social world" .

In addition, this self-consciousness can be put to analytical use and help to explore the researcher's influence on the research process and outcomes (Aamodt, 1991; Cutcliffe, 2003). Reflexivity allows researchers to add their own experience, perspective and emotions in a natural way, one that invites them to share it rather than

overlook or hide it (Cutcliffe, 2003; Steier, 1991). This sharing is important, as it creates a kind of transparency, one that is not only important for trustworthiness but can also help the readers become more aware of the researcher's preliminary standpoint including his/her values, beliefs, presumptions and prejudgments, and the ways they might have influenced the research process (Cutcliffe, 2003; Etherington, 2004; Gergen & Gergen, 1991; McLeod, 2002). This adds validity to the research providing wide information about the context in which data is located. Doing so, reflexivity provides information not only about what is known but also about the way this new knowledge was constructed (Etherington, 2004; Gergen & Gergen, 1991; McLeod, 2002; Steier, 1991).

Relating to the context of this Ph.D. and its Action Research framework, reflexivity can be used to bridge between research and practice, to create a dynamic interaction between researcher and participant and the data that informs decisions, actions and interpretations (Etherington, 2004). In addition, it can help researchers to include their intuitive and tacit knowledge in the analytic process, using it to generate new theory that might be beyond cognitive and systemic rational thinking (Cutcliffe, 2003; Mann, 2005).

4.1.6 Reflexivity and the Context of this Study

Being aware of the different influences that my personal and professional background may have had upon various processes of the work, and considering the methodological choice of conducting a qualitative, Action Research inquiry, it seemed appropriate to incorporate a reflexive standpoint into this study. The incorporation of this approach will help to create transparency, including details on the ways in which my personality, experience and pre-assumptions might have influenced the research, the creation of the theory and the parallel ways in which the research influenced me (Cutcliffe, 2003; Etherington, 2004; Hertz, 1997; Marshall, 2001; McLeod, 2002). This attitude matches Steier's argument that the constructivist standpoint of qualitative research also obligates the researcher to address him/herself and his/her own standpoint towards the research in a constructivist manner; one that is under ongoing development and exploration (Steier, 1991). As I am used to reflecting upon therapeutic processes, it seemed that the incorporation of dialogue with my clinical

and research supervisors, students, and colleagues could add to this reflexivity, adding on more voices and perspectives. The actual writing of this reflexive Chapter is based on different kinds of notes I have written throughout my life, in general, and specific notes I wrote during the research process.

The notes include:

1. A practitioner's logbook - relating to my experience as therapist, supervisor, supervisee and trainer.
2. A researcher's logbook - relating to my experience as researcher, including notes from supervision, and conversations with journal editors.
3. A personal diary - relating to personal experiences that were connected to the Ph.D. process.

4.1.7 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a widely used method for analysis of qualitative research data, in terms of its constituent themes or categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The aims of Grounded Theory, according to McLeod (2002) are:

"... to discover new ways of making sense of the social world... to generate a 'theory', a formal framework for understanding the phenomenon being investigated... (a theory that would) be 'grounded' in the data rather than being imposed on it" (McLeod, 2002: 70).

The method provides a formulized framework for generating theory from empirical data, while keeping a constant interplay between data collection and data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; McLeod, 2002). Unlike research that seeks verification of existing theory, Grounded Theory seeks to discover new theory. As it is an analytical discovery-oriented approach, it requires the researcher to be both sensitive to data and, also to his/her own 'bracket' preconceptions and assumptions (McLeod, 2002). Strauss & Corbin (1998) explain:

"(doing Grounded Theory analysis) the researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind (unless his or her purpose is to elaborate and

extend existing theory). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data" (1998: 12).

According to McLeod:

"grounded theory can be seen as a robust method for the generation of a form of practical knowledge that is particularly well suited to making a contribution to the efficient and human functioning world of modern bureaucratic systems of health and social welfare" (McLeod, 2002: 89).

Since its inception in the mid 1960's Glaser & Strauss have developed diverging views of Grounded Theory methodology. Glaser emphasizes the 'emergent' process of theory development, while Strauss emphasizes the 'systematic' aspect of managing data analysis and synthesis. The central issue in this debate is whether the data is forced or not. Glaser (1998) expresses his view by stating:

"the researcher will always find him/herself in a context replete with normative forcing that requires and expects him/her to discover a certain theory or theorize a certain way... the researcher should avoid, deal with, be aware of, live with and be humble under these pressures to force. The goal is to minimize forcing the data" (1998: 83).

While Strauss (1987) would generally agree, he also alternatively believes that organization of the data is a key to arriving at 'emergent' theory. As he explains, *"the excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding"* (1987: 27). Glaser (1998) believes that too great an emphasis on pre-conceived approaches to coding results in a measure of forcing the data. As he asserts, *"the Grounded Theory researcher is seeking how the participants socially organize their area of action, not how the researcher would prefer to see it organized..."* (1998: 102). Both emphases are worth noting, and it would benefit any researcher to try and find a balance between allowing the theory to emerge and providing a clear strategic approach to the data via coding. Relating to this dialectic discourse between Glaser and Strauss, it seems that the concept of theoretical sensitivity is a basic element in the technique. This is the notion that the researcher should have some knowledge of the field of inquiry where possible, and also should become more sensitive to the data as the various concepts and themes emerge. Strauss & Corbin (1998) explain that:

"the more sensitive a researcher is to the theoretical relevance of certain concepts, the more likely he or she is to recognize indicators of those concepts in the

data. Sensitivity usually grows throughout the research project and enables the researcher to decide what concepts to look for and where he or she might find indicators of them" (1998: 205-206).

4.1.8 Grounded Theory in the Context of this Study

Grounded Theory seemed most appropriate in relation to the aims of this Ph.D., and its constructivist and Action Research orientation. It could provide an analytical and systemic tool that would help categorise the knowledge that was gained from participants' experience, and contribute to the construction of theory. The process of 'open coding', breaking down, examining, comparing and categorizing the data into as many 'meaning units' as possible, allowed me to explore additional meanings that emerged from the data, while seeking new categories and concepts that could be used for the ongoing development of the theory. Similar ways of using Grounded Theory within Action Research case studies have been used in the Robinson, Carroll & Watson (2005) study into Action Research with families coping with cancer, the Ditrano & Silverstein study (Action Research in Schools) (2006) and Jenkin, Koch & Kralik (Action Research study of adults living with HIV) (2006). Each of these studies used participants' stories as the basis for construction of theories and interventions, which were later used for further (and hopefully better) treatment.

However, it was decided that there were some aspects of Grounded Theory methodology that were not entirely appropriate to the aims of the present study. Specifically, the emphasis in Grounded Theory on arriving at a single 'core category' was viewed as not being relevant to the aims of an Action Research Study that intended to identify a range of themes arising from each stage of the Action Research cycle, rather than one all-encompassing theme. As a result, a Grounded Theory approach was followed insofar as interview data was transcribed, and subjected to open coding. Emergent categories were then identified and checked through a process of constant comparison, assisted by on-going, reflexive, memo-ing. However, no attempt was made to achieve conceptual closure by identifying a core category. Instead, the analysis followed the methodological strategy employed by Levitt, Butler & Hill (2006), of seeking to identify specific therapeutic principles. The present study therefore adopted the broad methodological strategy, described by McLeod (2002) as

bricolage, to creatively adapt techniques of qualitative analysis in order to achieve the task at hand.

Being aware of the complexity that my role and pre-existing assumptions may have had upon this process, I tried to make the analytic process as transparent as possible, declaring my subjective perspective (highlighted in the reflexive Chapter), giving the research its trustworthiness by sharing the process with readers (Etherington, 2004; Kenneth, Gergern & Gergen, 1991; Marshall, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Stiles, 1993; Strier, 1991). In addition, inviting research participants and colleagues to comment on the analysis provides a form of member-checking that further contributes to the validity of the analysis.

4.1.9 Quality Control in Qualitative Research

The issue of quality control has been receiving more and more attention in the field of qualitative research. Due to the criticism to which quantitative research is subjected, with arguments posed against its subjective and narrative standpoints, the issue of quality control is essential not only to validate qualitative research outcomes and give them credibility, but also to explain their meaning (Elliott et al., 1999; McLeod, 2002; Morrow, 2005; Stiles, 1993). According to the literature, it seems that some qualitative research guidelines match some quantitative research guidelines. However, the field has developed additional guidelines that match its unique characteristics (Elliott et al., 1999; McLeod, 2002). These guidelines are summarized below.

1. *Quality guidelines which are shared by both quantitative and qualitative approaches.* The following list is based on McLeod's guidelines for publication of qualitative research (2002: 186):
 - a. Explicit scientific context and purpose: This issue aims to locate the study within relevant literature. It also aims to make sure that the purposes of the research are made clear.

- b. Appropriate methods: This issue aims to ensure that the procedures and methods that are used are appropriate and responsive to the research questions and its intended purpose.
 - c. Respect of participants: This issue aims to protect the participants in a way that informs consent, and considers confidentiality, participant welfare and other ethical issues.
 - d. Specification of methods: This issue aims to make sure that there are clear procedures for data collection and analysis so that readers can see how to conduct a similar study.
 - e. Appropriate discussion: This issue aims to make sure that the discussion is made in terms that are relevant to theory, method and practice and that it is written in appropriate contextual terms.
 - f. Clarity of presentation: The manuscript should be written clearly and be well organized, the technical terms defined.
 - g. Contribution to knowledge: The manuscript should contribute to an elaboration of a discipline's body of description and understanding.
2. *Quality guidelines which are especially pertinent for qualitative approaches.* The list is based on the writings of: Elliott et al., 1999; McLeod, 2002; Morrow, 2005; Stiles, 1993:
- 1. Transparency: Due to the subjectivity of the approach and the ways in which the researcher can (and does) influence the research process and its outcomes, a key factor in ensuring quality control in qualitative research is owning one's perspective. This enables readers to interpret the researcher's data and understand it; calls upon authors to specify and share their theoretical orientations and personal anticipations, those which are known in advance and those which become apparent during the research. This process of recognizing and sharing their values, pre-assumptions, interests and role within the research, also helps readers consider possible alternatives to relating and understanding the phenomenon under study. Reflexivity is a common way to attain this 'transparency'.

2. Situating the sample: In order to help readers judge the typicality of the data and make their own sense of it, writers are asked to describe research participants and their life circumstances.
3. Grounding the theory in examples: In order to help readers reach their own meaning and understanding, writers are advised to give examples (stories from practice including participants' experience of them), illustrating the analytical procedure and the understandings that were developed. This way of writing also aims to show the separation between the participants' experiences and the researcher's interpretation and to help the readers' judge as they see fit. This way of grounding the theory in examples also helps readers to understand the uniqueness of the study and avoid generalizing its conclusions;
4. Providing credibility checks: Aiming to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis and the division into categories or themes. Researchers are asked to re-check their work with at least one of the following sources:
 - research participants, colleagues, co-researchers or supervisors.
 - multiple qualitative analysis and a review of the data for overstatements or errors.
 - compare several qualitative perspectives.
 - cross-check research findings with relevant literature.
5. Coherence: In order to enable readers make meaning of the work, researchers are requested to represent their findings in a way that achieves coherence and integration between all research parts. The writing should form a data-based story/narrative/map/framework or underlying structure for the phenomenon or domain that was studied.

As far as possible, these guidelines have informed the conduct of the research that is reported in later Chapters. An analysis of the specific methodological issues that were encountered in the course of the research is provided in Section 7.5.

4.2 The Cycle of Action Research: An Overview of the Process

In light of the aim of the current work to develop a new therapeutic framework, and the Action Research concept of cycle of theory, action and research (Ditrano & Silverstein, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2001), the Ph.D. process included four large Action Research cycles. Although the Ph.D. constitutes the core of Nature Therapy's development, the document includes only central parts of this process, due to space limitations. Nevertheless, all its cycles are presented here (for other elements which were developed during the process but not included in the document, see Appendices).

The first larger cycle (which is composed of cycles 1+2) was oriented around the development and application of therapeutic Nature Therapy programmes in schools for children with special needs. As such, this larger cycle focuses on 'the real thing' - therapy.

The second larger cycle (which is composed of cycles 3+4) was oriented around the development and application of trainings. As such, this larger cycle focuses on the development of practitioners and professionalism.

The third larger cycle (which is composed of cycle 5) was oriented around the creating of a professional community and developing a dialogue with professions from other fields.

The fourth larger cycle (which is composed of cycle 6) presents other elements that were part of the Action Research process, but not detailed before: reading literature, receiving academic and clinical supervision, receiving article reviews and writing diaries.

Since these cycles nourish each other, one cycle opened a question that the other one answered. In accordance with the aim of this Ph.D., it seemed that this integrated way of doing research would help create the interaction between theory and

practice that would lead to the construction of the framework and its application in practice.

Although each cycle was oriented around a different element, their phases and strategy were quite similar. Within each cycle, a standard set of inquiry tasks was carried out:

Phase A: Theory/intervention/ generation.

Phase B: The application of the theory to practice (running a therapeutic programme, training or conference).

Phase C: Data collection.

Phase D: Data analysis.

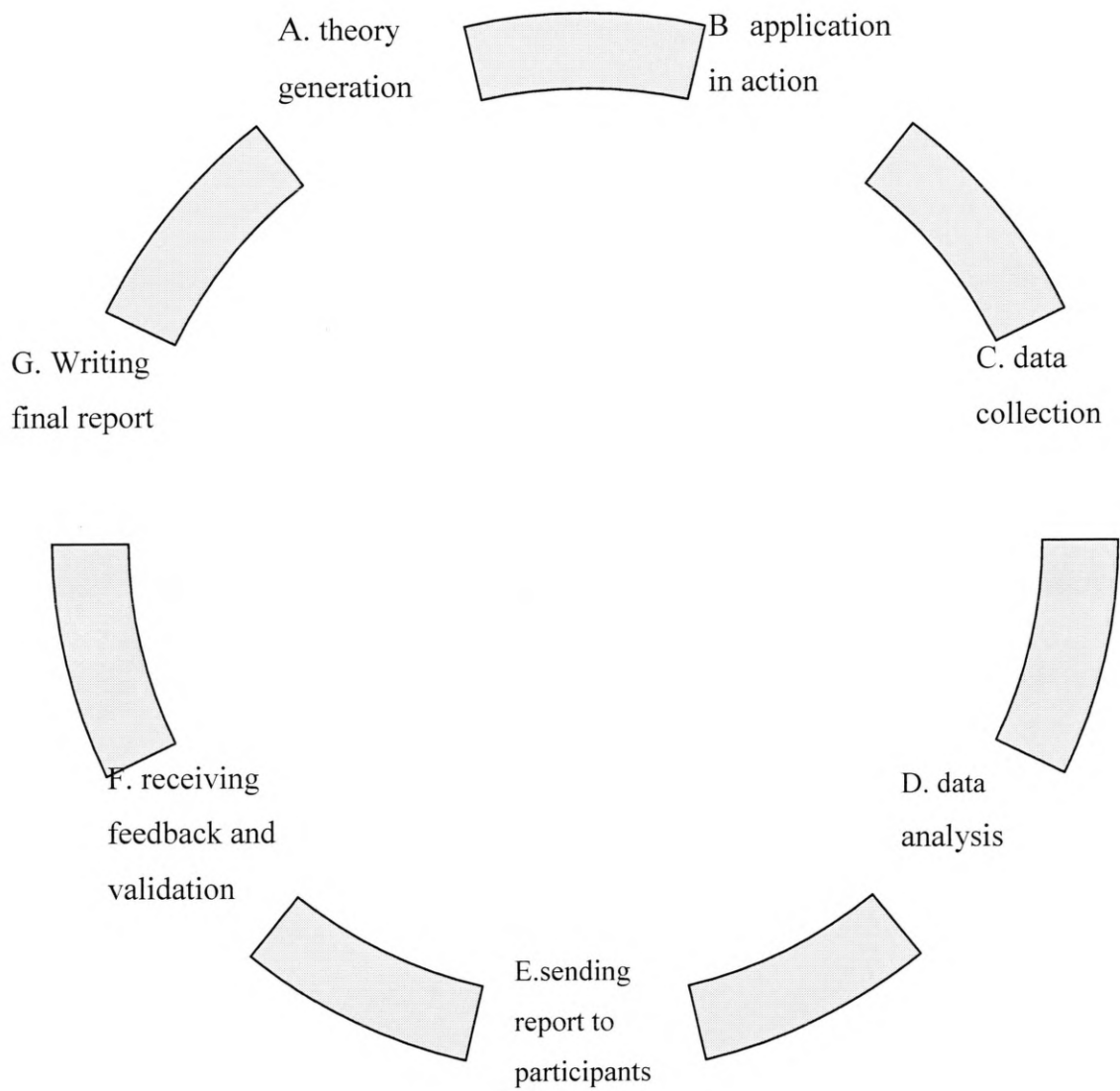
Phase E: Writing a preliminary report and sending it to participants.

Phase F: Receiving participants' feedback and conducting validity checks.

Phase G: Writing the final report, including conclusions and recommendations for future developments.

Phase K: Beginning the next cycle (generation of new theory).

Figure 4.1: Phases of the Cycle of Action Research



4.2.1 Cycle 1: From Primary Reflexivity to the Creation of a Pilot Programme

Phase A: July 2001: Generating new theoretical ideas.

With reference to my first experience doing therapy in nature (see Joseph's story, Chapter 2.3) I reflected on and challenged my ideas of 'what constitutes therapy', while exploring my relationship with nature. My initial thoughts about ways to integrate the two were collected for the writing and submission of the final dissertation of my Drama Therapy training, which I then titled Nature Therapy.

Phase B: August 2001-June 2002: Application (action).

The new theory that was generated in phase A was used for the writing of a therapeutic programme entitled Encounters with Nature (August-September 2001). The programme was accepted as a pilot by two schools for children with special needs and executed by me on a semi-voluntary basis.

Phase C: November 2001-July 2002: Data collection.

Notes on my experience of running the programme and on the impact it had upon the children were collected into my therapist log book. The notes included also impressions expressed by the school's psychologists and the teachers who accompanied the programme.

Phases D-G: February – August 2002: Data analysis, writing the report, sending it to participants and publication.

Basic analysis of the data, took place during supervisions and staff meetings throughout the programme. A report was prepared at the end and sent for participants' feedback. The final report was written and used in the application for the Ford Foundation International Award (environmental education). The award received, a few months later, funded the continuation of the project during its second year.

Phase K: October 2002- march 2003: Starting a new cycle - writing the Ph.D. research proposal.

The first cycle was not originally planed as part of research, but a straightforward therapeutic programme. While it was being executed, it was understood that this mode of work in nature did not have sufficient theoretical basis to

underpin it. This highlighted the need for further research that would articulate and develop such a framework. At this phase, I decided to go into a Ph.D. process in Sheffield Hallam University in England under the supervision of Drs. Colin Beard and Ian Rotherham (Education field), with Professors Mooli Lahad (Drama Therapy) and Haim Hazan (Anthropology) as external advisors in Israel. Later that year, Prof. Lahad retired from the supervisory team, and as the Ph.D. became more psychotherapeutically-oriented, I decided to continue at Abertay - Dundee University under the supervision of Prof. John McLeod.

4.2.2 Cycle 2: Developing a Therapeutic Programme – 'Encounters in Nature' for the Ministry of Education in Israel

Phase A: July - August 2003: Developing theory and offering a new programme.

Based upon the first cycle, the protocol of the 'Encounter in Nature' was re-written in a way that met the needs and characteristics of the children and the school system in a better way. The programme was accepted by the Department of Special Needs in the Ministry of Education in Israel.

Phase B: September 2003 – June 2004: Application (action).

This phase included several elements:

1. *September 2003*: Designing and running an intensive training for the 14 therapists and teachers who were chosen to operate the 'Encounters in Nature' programme in their home schools in the coming year.
2. *September 2003-June 2004*: Operating the programme in 4 schools for children with special needs in the north of Israel.
3. *September 2003-June 2004*: Giving Nature Therapy-oriented supervision to the teachers and therapists facilitating the programme.

Phase D: September 2003 -July 2004: Data collection.

Data was collected in the following order:

1. *September 2003*: Data about the training - was collected from the staff via questionnaires. It related to their experiences in the training and to their feelings and thoughts before the actual facilitation started.

2. *September 2003 - June 2004*: Data about the actual running of the programme was collected throughout the programme, via the teachers' and therapists' notes and my own notes from giving them supervision and from receiving supervision on their work.
3. *June - July 2004*: (after the programme concluded): In-depth data about the therapists' and teachers' experience facilitating the programme was collected via questionnaires and interviews.

Phase D-G: July 2004 - January 2005: Data analysis, writing report, sending to participants, writing a final report and publication.

This phase included the following stages:

1. *July 2004 – November 2004*: Data was analyzed using Grounded Theory technique.
2. *November 2004 - January 2005*: The preliminary report was written and sent to participants for feedback and validation.
3. *February 2005*: Participants gave in their feedback, input and validation.
4. *February 2005- April 2005*: Writing and submitting case study articles.

In June 2005 a Hebrew article (short version) based on the case study was published in the Israeli journal *The Voice of Education* (publication of the Israeli Ministry of Education) and in June 2006 a research article was published in the British journal *Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties* (Routledge Publications).

Phase K: July 2004 - September 2004: Starting a new cycle

Based upon the findings of the previous phase and the positive feedback from the system (children's parents, school teachers and therapists, school principals, psychologists and advisors) a renewed program was prepared for operation in six schools for children with special needs. An improved training course was designed, one that allowed the development and growth of the programme.

'Encounters in Nature' is still operating in schools for children with special need in Israel. It is applied within different 'Special Needs Population', including children diagnosed as having PDD, ADHD and ADD, children with low (mental)

development and children with psychiatric difficulties. The programme's positive effect and excellent feedbacks led the Ministry of Education to offer it on a national level and to Gordon College's offer to open a unique training programme for teachers, focusing on Nature Therapy applications with children with special needs. It appears that these developments will take place in the next academic year (October 2007).

4.2.3 Cycle 3: Developing Short Intensive Training Programmes

Phase A: September 2003 - June 2004: Developing the theory and offering intensive training for practitioners.

Based upon the learning that was gained through 'Encounters with Nature' and other therapeutic programmes that took place in different settings, and with different populations, the theory was further developed.

Phase B: December 2003 - September 2004: Application (running training courses)

Four intensive training courses were offered to practitioners, as I wanted to expand the Nature Therapy forum to enable more professionals to incorporate it into their work, and to work with additional populations and in different settings. The training courses were designed to last between two to four days each, each of them taking place in a different natural environment and different season. A community of therapists interested in Nature Therapy was formed (a core group of professionals who came to all trainings) among those who wanted to study the issue in more depth, for a longer period of time. Hence, a three-month training course was offered (see Chapter 6). To provide these trainings and answer the growing needs of the field, The Nature Therapy Centre was established in December 2003.

Phase C: December 2003 – October 2004: Data collection.

Data on participants' experience was collected by questionnaires at the end of trainings. As the research developed, the last (longer) training also included in-depth group interviews throughout the programme and after its conclusion (see Chapter 6).

Phase D-G: October 2004 - December 2006: Data analysis, writing report, sending to participants, writing a final report and publishing.

1. *October 2004 - August 2005: Data was analyzed using Grounded Theory technique.*
2. *August 2005 - October 2005: The preliminary report was written and sent to participants for feedback and validation.*
3. *December 2005: participants gave their feedback, input and validation.*
4. *June 2005-December 2006: Writing the final report, published in this Ph.D., which will later be re-written into a book or article.*

Phase K: September - October 2004: Starting a new cycle.

Based upon the insight gained in the training courses and the positive feedback received from participants, a protocol for a one-year training course was prepared and offered to Tel-Hai College, Israel.

4.2.4 Cycle 4: Developing Longer, Academic Trainings

Phase A: September - October 2004: Developing a year long (academic) training protocol (the first academic Nature Therapy training).

Based on the insight gained in the previews cycle, help from colleagues, supervisors and previous participants, a protocol for a year long training (200 contact hours) was designed and offered to Tel-Hai College.

Phase B: November 2004 - June 2005: Application (running the training)

Phase C: November 2004 - June 2005: Data collection.

Data was collected throughout the training and at the conclusion of the year (June 2005), using in-depth questionnaires and a group interview.

Phase D-G: July 2005 - September 2005: Data analysis, writing report, sending to participants, writing a final report and publishing.

Data was analyzed using Grounded Theory. A draft report was sent to participants and to colleagues. A final report was written and presented at the 1st Nature Therapy Conference (Tel-Hai College. July 2005).

Phase K: September 2005 - October 2006: Further development of (longer) academic trainings.

1. *September 2005 - August 2006:* The results of Cycle 3 were used to design a longer, 252-hour training course. The programme was expanded to an additional college and implemented in the academic year 2005-2006, both at Tel-Hai College in the north of Israel, and at Seminar Hakibbutzim College in Tel-Aviv. The same Action Research procedure was used, leading to another re-write of the training protocol and offering renewed programmes for the coming year.
2. *October 2006:* Three training programmes were offered: the previous two Group Counseling trainings were extended into a two-year programmes (400 hours), which were offered at Tel-Hai and Seminar Hakibbutzim Colleges. A third, new programme specifically oriented for Nature Therapy applications dealing with children with special needs was designed and offered at Gordon College in Haifa.

4.2.5 Cycle 5: Creating a Professional Community and Forming a Dialogue with other Professions

This cycle is correlated with the four cycles that were presented before. It uses elements that were developed in order to create a professional community and developing a dialogue with other professions. This cycle includes:

1. *May 2004 - today:* Publishing articles in journals and presentations at national and international conferences (see Appendix 2). Feedback from these conferences and journal reviewers are used to further develop the construction of the Nature Therapy framework.
2. *July 2005 – today:* Forming national Nature Therapy conferences.
The conferences provide a space to widen the dialogue between practitioners and the academic world. The meetings help to develop the framework and its application in practice. The conferences also provide opportunities to develop networks, an additional element that supports the field's development.

3. *July 2006 - today*: Establishing and developing a Nature Therapy Association: an organization that aims to support and unite Nature Therapy practitioners.
4. *August 2006 – today*: Widening the Nature Therapy Centre - creating more programmes and providing Nature Therapy work for professionals. An example of this process can be seen in the operation of the 'Safe Place in Nature' programme: working in schools with children suffering from war trauma. The programme is being facilitated by 13 professionals, who took part in trainings during 2004-2006. The programme is being coordinated and supervised by me.

4.2.6 Cycle 6: Elements from the Process that Took Place in Parallel to the Previous Cycles:

1. Ongoing reading, including reading about issues which were exposed by the analysis process, but were not thought of at the time the research was designed.
2. Receiving ongoing supervision as a therapist, supervisor and training director – an element which helps me to reflect and criticise the process from a practitioner's point of view.
3. Receiving ongoing academic and research supervision - an element which helps me reflect and criticise the process from an academic and research view.
4. Receiving reviews for articles – which helps me improve my writing and establish an academic language.
5. Writing a personal and professional diary - helps me reflect and process the issues that come up during work – this material will be used in the reflexive sections of this Ph.D. thesis.
6. On-going analysis of all the elements detailed above and those that have been developed since. This process contains both straightforward analysis such as Grounded Theory and also reflexive analysis carried out by me through dialoguing with colleagues, writing articles, dreaming, doing Nature Therapy and teaching it, taking and giving supervision and so on.

This ability to analyze while doing therapy is probably one of the main skills I have learned and developed throughout the Ph.D. process.

4.2.7 Cycle 7: Work Related to the Viva-Voce and the Examiner's Report:

After the viva and the examiner's report, another cycle of learning was instigated:

1. A chapter relating to the issue of NT ethics and to the relationships with nature in particular was written (Chapter 7).
2. A chapter relating to NT limitation was written (Chapter 7).

These two chapters touch upon important issues that relate not only to the framework's conceptualization, but also to the establishment and recognition of the practice. These two Chapters, which have already been submitted as articles for journals, can help the professional community gain this further development. Hopefully, this cycle will open yet another cycle; one which relates to future work, beyond this Ph.D. ...

4.2.8 Selection of Action Research Data for Presentation

A substantial amount of data was collected during the process of this Action Research project – far too much to include within this thesis. As a result, it was decided to use the thesis to highlight two representative stages of the study. In Chapter 5, reproduces a report that formed a large part of the work of Stage 2. Chapter 6 provides an account of the work that took place in Cycle 4. An over-view and discussion of the findings of all the stages of the action cycle is available in Chapter 7.

4.3. Research Procedures

As the thesis includes two different case studies, their procedures will be presented separately. More information about the actual work, including information about the programme or training can be found in the actual Chapters.

4.3.1 Case Study 1: 'Encounters with Nature' – Nature Therapy in a School for Children with Special Needs

'Encounters with Nature' is a therapeutic-educational programme for children with special needs, supported and recognized by the Israeli Education Ministry and the Nature Therapy Centre. Its official operation started in September 2003 with four schools for children with special needs in the north of Israel and continues until today with an increasing number of schools. The programme takes place in 'natural' spaces within the school's territory or in an open 'natural' environment near it. It operates as a two-hour weekly programme throughout the school year. The programme is facilitated with the cooperation of therapists and teachers who have participated in a Nature Therapy training programme and continue routinely to receive Nature Therapy-oriented supervision.

Recruiting clients and obtaining ethical approval:

After a year's pilot programme and a re-designed protocol (see Cycle 2 in previous sub-Chapter), the Israeli Ministry of Education accepted 'Encounter with Nature' as an official therapeutic programme, to be implemented in schools for children with special needs, in the north of the country. The Ministry's head supervisor offered four schools (schools which had a natural area nearby and whose teaching style included experiential modes) suited to participate in the programme in the coming year (September 2003–June 2004).

In order to improve learning and make sure it fed the programme's development, it was designed to include research as a core element. As such, the schools which joined the programme agreed to the research procedures, including its code of ethics. Information sheets regarding the research were distributed to all participants and collected once approved (see Appendix 1.1 and 1.2). It is important to state here that as the study aimed 'to explore the experience and understanding of the facilitators', only they (therapists and teachers) were involved in the actual research process. As such, they were the only ones with whom the researcher had direct contact via supervision, questionnaires, participation in interviews or dialoguing about the report. The researcher had no contact with the children who took part in the programme. The Israeli Ministry of Education approved these procedures as well as its use in the current Ph.D.

***a. Running the programme, receiving supervision and collecting data:
(September 2003-June 2004):***

Participants. The programme took place in four schools for children with special needs in the north of Israel. Two of these schools specialized in working with children with ADD, ADHD and behavioral difficulties; the other two specialized in working with children with different kinds of (mental) developmental difficulties. One school was Arab and the rest Jewish. The research details the work carried out in the Jewish school with children with late development problems.

Training. Once the schools were chosen and the research approved by all participants, a five day's training was given to the 14 teachers and therapist, about to facilitate the programme in the four home-schools involved. The training took place in one of the schools and included indoor and outdoor work, theory and practice. The training was facilitated by the researcher, in cooperation with Tali Mizrav, an education consultant and group facilitator.

Setting. 'Encounters with Nature' took place in 'natural' spaces within the school's territory or in an open 'natural' environment near it. It operated as a two-hour weekly programme throughout the school year. The programme was facilitated by the school's expressive art therapist, in cooperation with the home school's teacher.

Supervision of staff. Supervision was given to facilitators separately, every other week by the researcher. Supervision was given in the schools and incorporated indoor and outdoor work.

Supervision of supervision. Supervision given to the researcher by Michal Doron, a psychotherapist and drama therapist. They were held once every other week at Michal's clinic.

b. Data collection:

Data was collected by several methods:

1. Open ended questionnaires. These questionnaires were given to research participants (programme staff) twice during the programme: In-depth 'before questionnaires' were given at the end of training and prior to actual work with the children; 'after questionnaires' were given at the end of the year's programme, prior to interviews.

2. At the end of the programme, three-hour interviews were held for each of the facilitators. The interviews were transcribed.
3. Notes, of three kinds:
 - Facilitators' notes, in which detailed protocols of the sessions were documented. These notes were used during supervision and in filling out the 'after questionnaires'.
 - Researcher and supervisor's notes were filled out regularly after supervisions and throughout the research process. They were used throughout the process, especially in the process of analysing and writing the report.
 - Researcher's personal diary was used throughout the Ph.D. process and was used mainly for the writing of the reflexive Chapter.

c. Analysis:

When all data was collected and the interviews were transcribed, the analysis process began. Using Grounded Theory principles (McLeod, 2002) data were coded into as many as possible coding units. Doing this the units emerged from the actual text, letting the different meanings, words and themes that the text included determine the units and their coding. Then, units were collected into larger coding units under the specific common parameters that emerged from the text. At the end of this process four (larger) categories were present: Nature's role and influence upon the process, individual and group process, facilitators' process and 'other elements'.

d. Writing a draft report, sending it for participants' feedback and publication.

Once the analysis phase was concluded, a draft report was written and sent to participants for feedback. Then, upon receiving participants' comments and validation a final report was written and published in the Nature Therapy Conference Reader, 2005. An academic research article was published in 2006 (Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Journal).

e. Back to the cycle of Action Research

Changes in the programme were made based upon the report. They included elements in the programme, its training and supervision as well as the choice of schools participating in the programme.

4.3.2 Case Study 2: 'Between the Circle and the Cycle'

'Between the Circle and the Cycle' was a three-month advanced Nature Therapy training that took place between July and October 2004. It was designed for therapists and group facilitators who had participated in previous Nature Therapy trainings and wanted to widen and deepen their knowledge on the subject. The training incorporated three experiential workshops on full-moon nights, on the beach; with three indoors processing and conceptualization encounters.

Setting:

Ten therapists and group counselors (four men and six women aged 28 – 55) took part in the training (see Chapter 6).

The training included three full-moon, experiential workshops on the beach, followed by three indoors processing and conceptualizing encounters. The workshops took place once a month, starting on Thursday afternoon and ending on Friday morning. The follow-up processing encounters took place on Thursday afternoon, and lasted three hours each.

In addition, non-facilitated encounters were formed: between one participant and another and between each participant and a close family member or a friend. These meetings aimed at transferring the learning from the workshops to every-day life.

Supervision was given by Michal Doron.

a. Recruiting participants and receiving ethical approvals:

The idea of carrying out a 'Between the Circle and the Cycle' training came from practitioners who had participated in previous Nature Therapy trainings place throughout that year. As such, it was easy to recruit participants to join. As research was part of the previous trainings, participants were accustomed to the idea of filling out questionnaires and participating in interviews. A letter of invitation was sent to relevant candidates two month before the training, asking if they would like to join. The letter included details regarding the aim of the training, its setting, and an overall

statement about the methods and concepts that be used. It also included basic information about the accompanying research and basic information about the group contract. After the group was formed, a second letter was sent, giving participants more information about the training in general and about the accompanying research, in particular its aims, code of ethics, methods and publication options. The letter asked participants to give their official consent to take part in the research, with the knowledge that they could withdraw from it at any given time. (See Appendix 1.2).

b. Data collection:

Data was collected using these methods:

1. Open ended questionnaires. These in-depth questionnaires were given to research participants after the last indoor processing encounter, and prior to the interview (see Appendix 1.4).
2. Group interviews of two kinds:
 - a. Recordings of the indoors processing meetings. These meetings were not structured as an interview but documented the 'real, here and now' process.
 - b. A semi-structured interview that took place two months after the programme ended. The interview was based on the preliminary analysis of the questionnaires.
3. Notes of two kinds:
 - Facilitators' and researcher's notes were filled in regularly after supervisions and during the research process. They were used throughout the process (helping the facilitator to place the next meeting) and in the process of analysing and writing the report.
 - Researcher's personal diary was used throughout the Ph.D. process, mainly for the writing of the reflexive parts of the Chapter.

c. Analysis:

The material that was collected during this study was rich, complex and extensive, and presented a unique challenge in terms of analysis and writing. The intention of this material was to achieve two analytic goals: (a) to continue the form of analysis used in the previous 'Encounters with Nature' study (above), in order to

maintain coherence; (b) to present the material in a manner that represented, as authentically as possible, the lived experience of participants, in a form that would convey the experience of meaning of the events to readers. This intention was implemented using two parallel forms of analysis:

- a. Adapted Grounded Theory approach. The analysis process began when all data was collected and interviews transcribed. According to Grounded Theory principles (McLeod, 2002) data was coded into as many meaning units as possible. These units were then collected into a set of broader categories, which are presented in Table 2.
- b. Narrative Analysis. An approach to narrative analysis informed by the work of Speedy (2008) was employed. The aim was to produce a 'multi-voiced' text that captured the positions of the various participants in the training, while at the same time systematically providing illustrative examples of the categories that had been identified in the Grounded Theory analysis. The narrative analysis is presented in sections 6.2-6.6.

In order to provide readers with information about the coding and categorising of data, and to increase the amount of analytical commentary in the Chapter, connections are made between the categories generated in the analysis process (Table 2) and the 'multi-voiced' text displayed in chapters 6.2-6.6. Seeking to keep an authentic connection between the conduct of training (in action) and the analysis process, these links are made throughout the chapter using cross references. They are integrated into the flow and narrative of chapters 6.2-6.6. An explanation of the principles that emerged from this study and how they are linked to the categories in Table 2 is given in chapter 6.7.

d. Writing a draft report, sending for participant feedback and publication.

Once the analysis phase concluded, a draft report was written and sent for participants' feedback. Then, after receiving participant's comments and validation, a final report was written.

e. Back to the cycle of Action Research

Since this was the first long-term Nature Therapy training, the report and the findings it included were very important for the future developments of training. The recommendations were implemented in the design of the first year long training that began the next academic year.

4.4 Research Procedure: Overview and Conclusions

The research procedure embraced a complex set of research activities, that included the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, analysis using an adapted Grounded Theory approach and a narrative-informed approach, and the use of systematic critical reflexivity, and (where possible) informant feedback. At each stage, there were sensitive ethical issues that needed to be negotiated. All of these procedures were embedded in an Action Research framework, oriented toward the identification of therapeutic principles. A selection of the findings of this research process is presented in the next two chapters. The material in these chapters has been selected in order to exemplify the inquiry process that was pursued, with Chapter 5 focusing primarily on an adapted Grounded Theory analysis, and Chapter 6 primarily on a narrative account. Other parts of the research have been reported in published articles and in the Appendices.

CHAPTER 5 - 'BUILDING A HOME IN NATURE' - NATURE THERAPY WITH CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: A CASE STUDY

This Chapter presents a qualitative study based on the experience of practitioners who facilitated a Nature Therapy programme with a group of special-needs children, in a school setting. The case study explores the impact of the programme, focusing on the way nature influenced the process. This piece of research represents a major element of Cycle 2 of the Action Research plan.

A research article based on this Chapter was published in: Berger, R. (2006). Using contact with nature, creativity and rituals as a therapeutic medium with children with learning difficulties: A case study. Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties. 11 (2), 135-146.

Another shorter article based upon this case study titled Beyond Words was published in: Journal of Critical Psychology, Counseling and Psychotherapy, 2006, 6 (4), 195-199.

Introduction

Relating to the insight-oriented, symbolic and abstract language used in classical psychotherapy, it seems that it may be of little relevance for adults and children whose I.Q and abstraction skills are below the average (Butz et al., 2000; Nezu & Nezu, 1994). This may explain the development and growing use of creative and experiential approaches, working in non-verbal and non-cognitive ways, which may better suit the characteristics of this population (Polak, 2000). From the little published evidence, it seems that such an approach has been used successfully indoors in group and individual settings, as a means to develop social skills, self-confidence and self-esteem, and provide opportunities for personal exploration and expression (Polak, 2000). Nevertheless, despite the potential that may exist in nature as a setting suitable for non-verbal and experiential therapeutic-educational work, it seems that work has taken place only within the field of Adventure Therapy, working with children and youth with behavioural and/or authority and/or boundary problems (Garst et al., 2001; Kaly & Hessacker, 2003; Neill & Heubeck, 1998; Price & DeBever, 1998; Simpson & Gillis, 1998). Yet it seems that no form of outdoor therapy had been

developed for populations whose I.Q and abstraction skills are below average (Berger, 2005).

As there is only little published material exploring the option of working therapeutically with children with learning disabilities in nature, the aim of this case study is to explore the impact of Nature Therapy on them, as well as its impact upon the staff that facilitated it.

Setting the Scene

This study is part of a follow-up research on 'Encounters in Nature', a therapeutic-educational programme for children with special needs, taking place under the Israeli Education Ministry and The Nature Therapy Centre. The programme that this case study explores took place as a two-hour weekly programme throughout the 2003-2004 academic year. The research was carried out in order to explore the programme's impact and examine the specific influence that the contact with nature had upon the school children. During the analysis process, it became evident that the programme also had an important impact upon the facilitators, both personally and professionally, a section about this issue is included towards the end of the Chapter.

For further details regarding the methodology and procedures that were used in this research see Section 4.3.

Facilitation, Supervision and Training

The programme was jointly facilitated by Yaffa, a special-needs home teacher and Irit, a dance-movement therapist, both in their mid forties, and very experienced working with this population. Prior to the actual facilitation, the staff attended a five-day Nature Therapy training, in which the basic concepts of Nature Therapy were taught and the programme's outlines were delivered. The work was carried out under routine Nature Therapy-oriented supervision, given by the author every second/third week throughout the programme.

The School

The programme took place in a day school for children and youths with special needs, in the north of Israel. The school was attended by 64 pupils between the ages of six and twenty-one. Some of the pupils, in addition to organic disabilities, have other emotional, physical and /or behavioral difficulties and some are under psychiatric treatment. Most of the pupils come from low or middle socio-economic backgrounds, from different settlements and cultures (Jewish/Arab/Christians, Secular/Religious). The school buildings are surrounded by a high fence and trees, enclosing a small garden and a courtyard, in which the programme took place.

The Participants

The group consisted of five boys and two girls, aged 8 to 10. Like most of the pupils in this school, these children were of low intelligence and self-esteem and non-developed emotional language, communication and socializing skills. In addition, most were hyperactive and very dependent on adults, taking little initiative and responsibility for their actions. The group was characterized by a high level of anxiety that was expressed when coping with changes or unexpected events.

Programme Aims

The programme aimed at developing communication skills, improving the participant's positive interactions and their ability to work together as a group. It also aimed at improving their self-esteem and self-confidence, and at expanding their life experience and overall perspective.

Results

In order to provide as detailed an account as possible of the participants' experiences in this therapeutic programme, and considering the methodological choices presented in chapter 4, the analysis of interviews and questionnaire material is presented here in two parts: first, the detailed process the group went through in the ten months of its enactment and then an account of the categories generated through established theory analysis.

Illustrating the Process:

Autumn (first unit: sessions 1-6)

The first unit of the programme took place in the familiar classroom. This unit was designed to introduce the overall framework of the programme and various elements of it: the concept of conducting experiential, process-oriented group work in nature; cooperation between the home teacher and the therapist, and negotiating and signing the group contract. This unit was also used to complete the separation process from a number of classmates who had left the group during the previous year, but apparently were still with them. Since these issues dealt with different aspects of the concept of beginnings and changes, the work in this unit was focused around these issues. It was well correlated with the cyclic story of nature - the seasonal transition from summer to autumn and the various changes this brings. The sessions in this unit began with an opening ritual – standing in a circle, singing the song Together (a popular Hebrew song which talks about togetherness, love and peace), moving and dancing together at the same time, and concluding with the participants sharing current feelings. The work was carried on by looking out of the window, describing what was seen, and then moving into an exchange of thoughts and emotions arising from viewing the outside scenery. The session concluded with a closing ceremony similar to the opening one, using 'sharing' to reflect on the day's process. The unit expanded itself by adding structured outings into the school's open territories, exploring them, picking up meaningful objects and bringing them back into the classroom, then exploring them further in experiential ways. This unit was characterized by a high level of anxiety and a strong sense of egocentricity expressed by most of the children.

Yaffa: "It was very difficult to collect and hold them; it seemed as if each one was busy only with his/her own, personal needs."

Irit: "There was a lot of anxiety, especially fear of insects and snakes. It seemed as though they were used to dealing only with fixed and predictable things. Therefore we worked gradually, coming out of and returning to the known 'safe' environment, the classroom."

These outings expanded into longer explorations, aimed at locating a specific place to build a 'Home in Nature'.

Winter (second unit: sessions 7 – 20)

The second unit of the programme followed the structure built up during the first unit, and expanding upon it through the concept of 'Building a Home in Nature'. The sessions opened with the indoor 'together ritual', and continued in the chosen natural place, with an actual 'Building a Home in Nature' activity. This concept of 'Building a Home in Nature' was developed by the Nature Therapy Approach, and consists of a concrete, creative, activity of designing, building and maintaining a home in nature. According to Berger (2004; 2005), this home-space can be accepted as personal and/or group sacred space; a place which is qualitatively different than its surroundings; a safe place where transformation can take place (Jung, 1969).

In addition to this process, revisiting the home on a regular, weekly basis allowed the participants to explore and work on basic issues, such as boundaries, control and flexibility, belonging and identity. The physical process of building and containing the space is equivalent to the formation of the therapeutic alliance between therapist and client, as well as a physical representation of virtual potential space (Winnicott, 1971; Berger 2003; 2005). These factors, in addition to the non-verbal and creative characteristics involved, make the building process a powerful means for general therapeutic work, with this population in particular.

The actual work began with a sorting-out activity, getting rid of garbage which had been dumped at the chosen location, a peripheral area within the school, not touched by others. The building process began with the group choosing to build individual homes, as opposed to the option of building one mutual group home. The homes were located at a distance of 50 cm. up to 2 meters from each other, and were constructed from materials found on site. The 'homes' were quite different from each other, in size, height, width of boundaries and materials used. Some were prominent, having a clear form and boundaries, while others were hardly seen. The differences between the 'homes' illustrated not only elements of each child's personality, relating to such issues as boundaries, use of space and dominance, but also to group dynamics; relating to who is in the centre and who is outside. After the construction phase, some dialogues took place between the children. Some joined another's 'home' while others stayed in their original one. Some wanted to stay and 'be' in their 'homes' while others

wanted to experience more of the 'doing state', asking to wander to further locations and explore the surroundings. The weather and other 'natural' elements played a big role in shaping of the process. As winter stepped in, the environment changed: rain and mud were present, plants sprouted, and animals, such as migrating birds and earthworms appeared. These elements intrigued the group members, who were not accustomed to encountering such elements so directly within the school setting and perhaps not in their lives, in general. This pushed the group to set out from their 'home in nature' to further areas, exploring what could be found in the "here and now". Some objects, such as mud and earthworms, were brought back into the classroom, where they were explored, by means of experiential learning principles.

Yaffa: "The encounters with the natural elements gave the children a chance to experience and explore things which they had never before met. It was great to see how their attitudes changed, not only towards the natural elements themselves, such as insects and mud, but beyond that to the option of opening themselves up to experience and encounter the world."

This unit was characterized by an individuation process, allowing the participants to explore various personal issues, while keeping a nourishing dialogue with the other group members. Again, the conclusion of this unit and moving on to the next stage were influenced and shaped by the change of the seasons: end of winter, the spring budding and the onset of warm summer days.

Spring and Summer (third unit: sessions 21 - 30)

As winter ended and the warm days of spring and summer followed, together with the drying of the soil and wilting of the flora, a new voice was heard in the group. This voice, common to both participants and facilitators, raised the option of leaving the present location, and looking for a new place which would suit the new circumstances better.

Irit: "The sheltered and pleasant feeling turned into a sensation of heat and hardship. It felt very strong – reality changed and we had to adjust, to look for other alternatives and to change. It connected with something very primeval within me – the need to migrate."

The sessions in this unit focused around the concept of separation from the personal 'homes' and the transition to a new chosen territory, on which a new shared

'group home' would be built. The process was designed in a dramatic way, using drama therapy's image of therapy as a ritualistic journey (Lahad, 1992; Jennings, 1995, 1998; Jones, 1996; Grainer, 1995). As such, these sessions were oriented around questions such as: Where are we going? What new reality do we intend to meet and create? What obstacles might come in our way? What can help us overcome them? What should we take with us and what should we leave behind?

At the outset, a new place was chosen, this time closer to the school's building; surrounded by high trees which provided shelter from the sun and wind. Boundaries were then checked and marked.

Yaffa: "It was great to see how they took claimed the space, wanting to protect it, declaring it as theirs by writing 'No Entrance' signs and placing them on its borders. One boy even built 'traps' around the home – widening its territory and giving it additional symbolic protection".

The actual building started by bringing materials from the former 'personal homes' to the new site, including symbolic elements, building materials and even earth.

Yaffa: "Tory found the transition difficult. In the beginning he chose to build a personal home outside the communal one, near, but, separated. Later, when we started singing and talking inside the home territory, he peeked inside but refused to enter. It took time until he came in and joined, constructing a personal space within the communal one."

Once the 'home' was built, the participants followed their own interests, taking initiative to deal with various activities. An interesting difference occurred between the boys and the girls: while the boys kept busy outside the home, making swords and weapons and playing with them, going on symbolic hunting expeditions, the girls stayed at home, cleaning and decorating it.

The final stage of the work took place towards the end of the school year. It consisted of two major issues. One was the separation from the 'home' site, revisiting the places in nature which had been used in different phases of the work, relating to

them, exploring them in perspective and giving them personal and group meanings. The second issue was the separation from the therapist, who was about to go on a year's sabbatical and leave the children after having worked with them for several years.

Irit: "Because the whole process was very meaningful for me, it was hard to say goodbye. In the last ritual, many goodbye songs came up spontaneously, it was very moving."

This final unit was characterized by a process of group coherence, strengthening trust and intimacy within the group. This process was expressed by the action of taking active responsibility for the formation and maintenance of the group's safe space, the 'home in nature'. It was centered around the group dynamic and narrative, in contrast to the previous phase, which was centered on the individual. The unit ended with a closure and separation process, departing not only from one of the group facilitators but also from 'nature' which had given the group a space to experience, learn and grow.

Data Analysis, Coding and Meaning-making Process

Grounded Theory analysis of data from interviews and questionnaires provided by the facilitators generated the following main categories:

1. Nature's role and influence on the process.
2. The impact of the programme on group participants.
3. The impact of the programme on facilitators.

In order to increase the amount of analytical commentary, connections are made between these categories (and their sub-categories) and the results, by cross references to Table number 1. Aiming at illustrating the coding process and highlighting their appearance in the data, relevant quotes are incorporated. In accord with the practical orientation of this study and its chosen methodology (Chapter 4), these quotes also seek to give the text more life, to help readers engage with it and highlight its connection to practice. Aiming not to overload the Chapter with quotes,

some sub-categories are reflected by the same quote. i.e. the one quote can demonstrate two sub-categories.

Table Number 1: Number of Times each Theme was mentioned in the Data

* The category number relates to categories generated from the collection of themes below.

* Category 1. Nature's role and influence upon the process	Total:
	60
T.1.1. nature as a creator of a different atmosphere and way of being (than the everyday class ambience)	17
T.1.2. the influence that nature's independent dynamics and changes had upon the process	9
T.1.3. disturbing factors in nature	9
T.1.4. working with the elements and their impact upon process	8
T.1.5. nature as a supplier of physical elements	7
T.1.6. nature as a factor that encourages introspection and intimacy	5
T.1.7. nature as a factor that encourages togetherness and intimacy	5
 * Category 2. Program's impact on participants:	 Total:
	75
T.1.8. helps to organize inner order and reduces anxiety	18
T.1.9. help individuals become a group	13
T.1.10. develops personal and group responsibility	10
T.1.11. helps to change the attitude towards nature	10
T.1.12. increase in the feeling of safety	7
T.1.13. expands repertoire	7

T.1.14. decrease violence	5
T.1.15. builds self-esteem and felling of value	5
* Category 3. program's impact on facilitators (teacher and therapist)	Total: 69 (39+30)
* Category 3.1. Professional development and change of perspective	Total: 39
T.1.16. expanding perspectives and meanings given to process	12
T.1.17. attitude to nature as a working space (setting)	11
T.1.18. developing creativity, flexibility and self-esteem	6
T.1.19. changing the attitude towards nature	5
T.1.20. developing the ability to be in the "here and now"	5
* Category 3.2. Working in nature therapy as a way to support and bridge the gap between therapy and education, therapist and teacher:	Total: 30
T.1.21. creating a mutual language and goals	11
T.1.22. reducing gaps, creating trust and a feeling of belonging	10
T.1.23. helps to share responsibility and maintain a collective space	9

In all, the Grounded Theory analysis produced 204 sub-categories which were collected into three categories, i.e. main meaning-making units. These categories include only meaning units (sub-category's) which had more then 4 coding units each.

1. Nature's role and influence on the process.
2. The impact of the programme on group participants.
3. The impact of the programme on facilitators.

1. Nature's role and influence on the process

This category relates to different kind of influences nature had upon the process. Much of it relates to the uniqueness of Nature Therapy and includes elements that might have not taken place indoors. This category includes 60 coding units, which are presented in Table 1 and illustrated by quotes that are integrated in the text.

One of the strongest elements which influenced the process related to nature's independent dynamics and changes (T.1.1.). These elements relate mainly to the change of seasons, and the independent dynamics of animals and plants. They influenced not only the physical space, constantly shaping the setting, but also the art forms and the 'homes' built 'inside' it. This situation created a unique therapeutic circumstance, in which both facilitators and participants were present in an ever-changing environment that was not under their control or ownership. It appears that this element exercised one of the strongest implications on the process, raising the issue of coping with the uncontrollable and unexpected, and developing flexibility and coping mechanisms.

Irit: "The biggest influence that the programme had upon the children revolved around the question of coping with an ever-changing environment. This reality brought up many opportunities to work on the question 'how do I cope and function with the unexpected changes that life may bring?'"

This issue (T.1.2) challenged not only the children who participated in the programme, but also the facilitators, raising the question whether 'nature' is an obstacle and disturbing factor (T.1.3; T.1.19 & T.1.17), getting in the way of the facilitators' original plans, forcing them to work in correlation with it and keep to an open and flexible mode of working.

Yaffa: "These changes, the drying of the earth and the growth of the thorns, all had to be coped with, encouraging us to keep a flexible mode of working. This way of working makes you really be present and work in the here and now."

During the programme, with the support of the Nature Therapy-oriented supervision, a different perspective was developed, namely learning how to relate to

nature's dynamic as a form of therapeutic intervention, which presents the participants and facilitators with a spontaneous, rather than planned, perspective or activity.

Irit: "Then the rain came, giving the children a chance to get wet and dirty, to touch mud and bringing them into touch with their senses."

In this sense, nature, as a dynamic and sensuous space, gave the children an opportunity they would never find in the classroom, not only in the concrete aspect of the encounter with the rain and mud, but also presenting them with the chance of doing something which is not allowed within a permissive therapeutic framework.

Another significant element influencing the process was the way in which nature provided the group with an alternative space, offering a different atmosphere from the classroom (T.1.1.). According to research findings, this had an important impact, not only on the physicality of the setting, being outdoors, large and open, but also on the whole atmosphere it evoked. This atmosphere could have been emotional, physical, spiritual or aesthetic and had several implications on the process. It brought up the use of the experiential mode of 'being' and increased the participant's connection with themselves and others.

Irit: "Nature is a special environment to work in, as it calls for metaphors, creativity and physicality and less for concreteness. In school everything is based on skill, here they had a different opportunity."

This aspect is inherently connected to the facilitator's choice of methods; maintaining a dialogue between a structured and deductive form and a flowing, creative, non-verbal mode of working; staying in the experience without cognitive and verbal processing.

Part of this special atmosphere provided by nature can be addressed as a kind of supportive space, which encourages listening and develops the ability to remain in 'being' states.

Irit: "It seemed like certain behaviors and emotions which were hardly expressed in the classroom were frequently expressed in nature: caring for each other, a sense of belonging, curiosity, and personal and group responsibility. There was no need to ask for permission to talk, or any need to remain sitting on chairs,

which reduced conflicts and invited calmness and togetherness. Since the space was so big and varied, each child had the opportunity to find something of interest: an insect, a rock or a plant. In this sense, when someone had difficulty with a specific activity, he/she could find an alternative one and stay within the overall framework without breaking it down."

In addition, this aspect encouraged togetherness and helped the group members to reach new level of intimacy (T.1.7).

Yaffa: "There was something in nature that made them connect in a different way. Perhaps it was the fear of nature that made them bond, looking for support from each other. Some took leadership roles and became very active. This process was present also in the classroom, but it was more prominent in nature."

There is no doubt that this 'permission' and the supportive elements of nature are connected with the atmosphere and emotional space which was created, held and maintained by the group facilitators, yet it seems as if there was something additional that made this special ambience possible. It can be explained perhaps by the difference of the space, inviting people to leave behind their prejudices about themselves and others; arrive fresh and open to nature, allowing alternative narratives to be expressed and developed. It may also be that there is something in the elements and environment itself, perhaps the spiritual and emotional wisdom of good old Mother Earth that provides a feeling of contentment and freedom (T.1.4.).

An additional kind of contribution nature offered, was its ability to supply physical materials which were needed for the active and creative 'home building' process (T.1.5.).

Yaffa: "The 'home' was built out of materials which were found on site and elements which were brought from the previous, personal 'homes'. Branches and sheets were used to create walls and borders. This element has an important symbolic meaning, making the statement 'we can construct our new reality and narrative using the things we have, right now, creating the future out of the present'."

These findings, illustrating nature's role and influence, are consistent with one of Nature Therapy's basic concepts concerning the three-way relationship between the therapist, client and nature. The findings support this concept by illustrating 'nature' not only as a physical setting which provides space and materials, but also as a partner in the process shaping the setting the facilitator's interventions and methodological choices, hence expanding the therapeutic influence of the entire process (Berger 2003, 2005).

2. The impact of the programme on the group participants

This category relates to different therapeutic impacts that the program had upon participants. It includes 75 coding units, which are presented in Table 1 and illustrated by quotes which are integrated in the text.

The process included a procedure group formation, whereby a collection of individuals who hardly communicated, bonded into a functioning group whose members cared, communicated, interacted and worked with each other (T.1.9.).

Irit: "At the beginning, it seemed as if each of the children was busy with himself choosing to build individual houses, avoiding the option to work in couples or triples. With time, a gradual change took place and spontaneous collaborations emerged and relationships were built."

This process was empowered and received concrete meaning through building 'homes in nature', involving the transition from an individual 'home' to group homes. Group and personal responsibility was also developed as the group became more active and bonded (T.1.10 & T.1.12.).

Yaffa: "They placed 'No Entry' signs and asked to close the place with walls to prevent other children coming in. I enjoyed watching this active-protest action. It is so rare to see them behave that way, taking active responsibility upon themselves."

Throughout this process, varied personal learning was gained, and communication skills were developed, as violence decreased within the group (T.1.14).

Irit: "At the beginning they did not know how to talk to each other; mainly, they just swore or used their hands against each other... during the process they learned to communicate, to talk, listen and share. Today there is hardly any fighting or swearing."

The creative mode of working encouraged the development of self expression, including the development of non-verbal and creative communication skills (T.1.23):

Yaffa: "During the year's work, the opening ritual changed. It became more creative and open, because they used their bodies more freely, initiating more movement and vocalization."

Throughout the whole process, self-esteem and self-confidence were built up (T.1.15), as the group changed its meeting place from a marginal and neglected location (where the first personal 'homes' were built) to a more central and popular area (where the 'group home' was constructed). Similarly, individuals sounded their voices and became more dominant:

Irit: "Marisa went through a big change. At the beginning, I wondered if I would ever hear her say anything. She used to be afraid of leaving the class room or going out to the courtyard during the breaks. Now I am amazed, watching her play with the others during the breaks, communicating and expressing herself. She even learned how to resist and stand up for herself."

Personal and group cohesion was also developed, as the level of anxiety decreased and a sense of belonging was formed (T.1.8).

Yaffa: "In the beginning, we would come out of the classroom in a clear structure: I walked in front and Irit walked at the back, trying to give them a sense of security. As time went by, the children were able to let go of this protective structure, and simply ran and enjoyed themselves together."

In addition to the personal learning which the participants have achieved, they have also changed their attitude and behaviour towards nature (T.1.11), moving from fear and alienation to familiarity, belonging and caring, expressing curiosity and affection towards it.

Yaffa: "At first, most of the kids were afraid of animals and shouted when they saw one. With time, through the experiential encounters with the natural elements (fauna and flora), exploring them in direct ways, their attitude changed to one of curiosity and affection, as the shouts turned into calls of excitement, inviting others to see the animal that was found."

It appears that this change is connected to the feeling of belonging which was developed during the process of building the 'home in nature'. The sense of belonging came about not only between the participants, but also between them and the actual place – nature (T.1.11).

Irit: "They tried to turn nature into something familiar, into their home. It was as if they wanted to bring in transitional objects, things which would give them confidence".

According to these findings, it appears that there is an interesting correlation between the process of 'building a home in nature' and the process of familiarization with nature. Apparently, a direct encounter between the participants and nature was necessary in order to let go of feelings of fear and alienation, transforming these into feelings such as belonging, partnership and ownership. These findings strengthen one of Nature Therapy's basic assumptions: that granting love and care to nature are possible through a personal-emotional process and not only through the behavioural approaches so often used in environmental education programmes (Berger, 2003). Hence, Nature-Therapy may be addressed as an innovative environmental education approach, working together with the basic Ecopsychology concept, which argues that in order to change people's attitude and behaviour towards nature, they must go through a personal – emotional process of feeling as if they are part of nature, as if it was their home (Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003).

From an overall perspective, it appears that this specific way of working in nature triggered a number of basic psychological themes such as fear of the uncontrolled and unpredictable, together with identity issues, such as the concept of personal boundaries, and the need to belong to other people and/or place. It appears that the direct contact with the natural elements triggered these basic humanistic,

perhaps universal issues, allowing the participants to explore and develop them within a therapeutic environment.

3. The impact upon the facilitators

This category relates to different impacts that the program had upon facilitators. Although it was not one of the issues that the analysis process aimed to explore, it emerged and unfolded from the 69 coding units it included and which are presented in Table 1. These sub-categories are illustrated by quotes which are integrated in the text.

The parallel process that the facilitators went through expressed itself in two major aspects. One aspect concerned the professional and personal learning process, which enabled developing specific skills and qualities (Table 1, Category 3.1), and the other aspect was the special team-building process, using Nature Therapy as a medium to bridge gaps in a way that forms a strong collaboration (Table 1, Category 3.2).

It appears that working with Encounters in Nature empowered the teacher's self confidence, allowing her to expand her creativity and flexibility, and open herself up to the option of working in a therapeutic, process-oriented manner (T.1.18) (as opposed to the deductive way she was accustomed to, and perhaps expected to use throughout her years in the system).

Yaffa: "The programme allowed me to acknowledge my strength and initiative. It feels as if my creativity was depressed for years, and here I got a chance to open myself up and create; to work like I really wanted to, without doing what the others (teachers) think or say. I was accustomed to working with a structured and clear programme, but here I was challenged to work in a flowing and 'less knowing' way. Working with the unexpected changes that nature brought, under a creative orientation, helped me to expand my flexibility and my ability to work in the here and now."

In addition, supported by the collaborative work with the therapist and the accompanying supervision, the teacher was able to develop her therapeutic skills (T.1.16).

Irit: "My whole way of observing things changed. Things which were meaningless became important and full of meaning."

The therapists gained other benefits from the work, expanding the ability to work in partnership, to trust, to give space and to collaborate (T.1.21 & T.1.23).

Irit: "My strongest experience from the programme was the collaborative work with Yaffa. At first, it brought many questions regarding the differences between our languages and ways of working (i.e., the therapeutic and the educational), the hierarchy and roles within the school. Normally working in collaboration is not easy for me - I prefer to work alone; with Yaffa a special relationship was built, one of trust and collaboration."

Another kind of contribution gained from the programme revolved around the team building process, developing the ability to work in collaboration (T.1.22). This style of working, integrating therapeutic and educational modes of working, is quite rare in the school system in Israel, where they are usually clearly separated. This way of working improved the efficacy of the work and changed the staff's experience of the school system.

Irit: "Working with Yaffa allowed me to feel legitimate in the school. This feeling of belonging and 'being O.K.' was new for me after years of working there and feeling like an outsider."

Exploring this process in perspective, it appears that nature, as a neutral place, allowed the teacher and therapist to meet on equal ground and build their relationship and collaboration there, far away from the school's hierarchy and usual way of addressing things.

To conclude this section, it appears that one of the most important elements gained through this work was the option of conducting therapeutic-educational programmes in nature, outside the familiar classroom, using process-oriented, creative and non-verbal ways of working under an integrated therapeutic-educational mode of working.

Discussion

Considering the aims of this case study, its conclusions can be divided into three major sections: (a) nature's potential as a therapeutic medium; (b) the process that the participants went through, and (c) the parallel process of the group facilitators. It appears that nature provided the participants (and staff) with an alternative space, clean of prejudice and human hierarchy, and thereby allowed them to explore personal and interpersonal issues, develop skills and expand personal narratives. From a closer, perhaps spiritual or Ecopsychological perspective, it seems that nature's independent dynamic had an important role, becoming an active medium, a co-therapist perhaps; creating space and triggering specific issues, shaping the process in various ways. This understanding supports conceptualization of the three-way relationship - client-therapist-nature - and gives its potential evident.

Regarding the process that participants went through, it seems that Nature Therapy can have a high potential with this particular population, contributing a group building process, as well as developing issues such as personal responsibility, communication, cooperation, creativity, curiosity and flexibility. These are important coping mechanisms, which can improve a person's overall function and well-being (Lahad, 1992). In addition, the programme increased self-esteem, while anxiety and aggressive behavior decreased. Another interesting outcome of the programme was the change that took place in the children's attitude towards nature, changing from alienation and fear into one of familiarity, belonging and caring.

With respect to the third parameter, the facilitator's process, which emerged during Grounded Theory analysis, it appears that Nature Therapy can also have a significant impact on staff facilitating programmes, contributing to their personal and professional learning, developing creativity, flexibility and communication skills. It is evident that the approach also had an impact on the team-building process, bridging gaps between therapists and teachers, therapy and education.

Observing the process from a wider perspective, it appears that the programme opened a new working possibility within the school, using nature and a dialogue with

it as an experiential, non-verbal medium to support therapeutic and educational learning.

Summary

This case study highlights one of the ways in which Nature Therapy can be implemented with children with learning disabilities, addressing nature as a medium for experiential and non-verbal work. It presents and discusses the unique role that nature played in the work, taking part in the shaping of both the setting and the process. The study also presents ways in which the collaborative work in nature supported the facilitators' parallel process; expanding skills, bridging gaps and forming a strong, well-functioning and versatile team. The proposal arising from these findings is to go beyond the common behavioural and cognitive approaches used with children with learning disabilities, on the claim that these classical ways of working can be adjusted to suit the special characteristics and needs of this specific population (less verbal and less cognitive).

Further research could focus on more specific elements that contributed or interrupted the work, including widening the number of participants, and allowing the research to use quantitative and statistical analysis.

CHAPTER 6 - 'BETWEEN THE CIRCLE AND THE CYCLE'

This Chapter uses the description of a Nature Therapy training to illustrate ways in which nature, creativity and spirituality join together in a new therapeutic framework. This study comprises a major component of Cycle 3 of the Action Research sequence.

Prologue

Chapter 2 presented the key assumptions that informed the development of Nature Therapy. The previous case study (Chapter 5) was part of a wider research project, based on work carried out with groups of children with special needs, in school setting and supported by the Israeli Ministry of Education. The settings and use of environment was limited to the school's territory and to two-hour weekly sessions. Since the aim of this Ph.D. is to generate wider practical knowledge that can support the operation of Nature Therapy in different settings and with different types of clients, this Chapter provides an explicit and detailed description of such work. As the last case study within this work and the only one facilitated by its author, this Chapter seeks to use his voice as well as participants' voices, in a fashion that shows a way the theory (that was presented before) can be used in a Nature Therapy training. In addition, the case aims to illustrate some of Nature Therapy's therapeutic potential and to highlight complexities that need to be addressed in future design of therapeutic programmes, in general, and trainings, in particular. Last but not least, it will use the participants' (therapists) voices and conceptualization ability to develop new concepts as well as to point out issues that need to be addressed in further development. This style of writing follows Speedy's approach (Chapter 4.3.2.) as well as the Action Research and practice orientation of this thesis. It aims to give the readers an authentic and multi-dimensional descriptive document that can help them incorporate elements from it in their work.

In order to give practical knowledge in an authentic way the Chapter will:

1. Share reflexive thoughts and subtext of the facilitator, the author of this work, illustrating the way in which his knowledge of Nature Therapy theory, his understanding and interpretation of the therapeutic and group process as well as his own personality influenced his choice of interventions, planning the workshop and running it in real time;
2. Present the impact that the work had upon participants, highlighting specific therapeutic issues that such a model can trigger and the ways in which they can be dealt within it;
3. Identify questions and issues that need further development;
4. Identify questions regarding the structure of Nature Therapy training and the balance between theory and experience within them (to be discussed further in Chapter 7).

As a result of the wish to provide readers with as detailed as possible an insight into both the process of Nature therapy training, and the meaning that it has for participants, this Chapter seeks to create a ‘thick’ narrative, comprising a multi-layered text, in which the unique involvement of all participants can be tracked.

6.1 Placing Things in Context:

‘Between the circle and the cycle’ was a Nature Therapy training that took place between July and October 2004. It was designed for therapists and group facilitators who had participated in previous Nature Therapy trainings held as 3-4 day intensives, in different wilderness locations in Israel throughout the academic years 2003-2004.

A letter of invitation was sent to relevant candidates two month prior to training. It included a definition of the setting, a preliminary group contract and an overall statement about the methods and concepts to be used. A second letter was sent to participants a week before the first workshop took place, giving them more

practical information regarding the place and time of encounter, food and sleep arrangements and a proposal for a group contract.

Setting

The training combined a series of three experiential workshops, on full-moon nights on the beach, followed-up by three processing and conceptualization indoor encounters between them. The workshops began on Thursdays at 16:30 and ended on Fridays between 9:30-10:00. All workshops were held at Habonim sea-shore, a beautiful nature reserve in the north of Israel. The workshop activity took place during most of the night, leaving only 2-3 hours to sleep on the beach. The facilitator, relating to the experience as a key factor in learning and as a basis for further conceptualization, insisted on staying within the emotional, spiritual and physical experience, leaving cognitive and 'rational' matters for the follow-up processing meetings.

The processing encounters were held in participants' homes two weeks after the workshop for a period of three hours each. The meetings aimed to create a space in which participants could share the impact that the workshop had upon them while using the group to add to their reflections, normalize complex issues and expand perspectives. Using these personal reflections and questions the encounters also aimed to conceptualize and further develop the Nature Therapy framework while reassigning issues that needed further development. Last but not least, the indoor encounters gave the facilitator a better sense of the 'place' participants were in and helped him plan the process ahead.

Non-facilitated meetings

During the interval between workshop and the indoor meetings, participants were asked to meet for two kinds of non-facilitated meetings:

1. With a member of the group - sharing, discussing, and processing the issues that touched them during the workshop.
2. With a close person, such as a family member or a close friend aiming to help them transfer the learning gained at the workshop to their home

environment and process issues that are also connected to the person they chose to meet.

The overall aim of these non-facilitated encounters was to support the transition from the training-therapeutic-group setting into the every day environment, helping participants turn their insights and learning into concrete actions and living.

Group contract

A group contract was offered and agreed upon prior to the training, due to the experiential mode of the training in which personal experience was one of the main vehicles for learning. The contract acknowledged the benefits that a safe, playful and trustful group environment could have upon such process. It included the following elements:

1. Participants were asked to keep confidential any personal material shared within the training.
2. As the workshop took place at night, participants were asked not to distance themselves from the group without informing the facilitator.
3. In case one of the participants was aware of any chronic illness, in general, and sensitivity to insects stings, asthma, or diabetes, in particular, he/she was asked to inform the group facilitator about it prior to the beginning of the training.
4. In addition, the structure of the two 'non-facilitated meetings' was suggested but not compulsory (without any obligation of sharing its outcome with the group and facilitator).

Participants

The group was composed of nine therapists and group counselors and one nature photographer and nature guide: four men and six women, aged between the early thirties and middle fifties. All of the therapists were interested in expanding their 'clinical' modes of working and add skills and techniques that would help them develop a Nature Therapy-oriented practice. The photographer (who is also a nature guide) came wanting to experience another mode of working with groups in nature and also for his own process. Most participants had had deep experiences in nature

prior to the training, and a strong personal and/or professional connection with it. All participants except one (Miriam) had taken part in previous Nature Therapy trainings during the academic year 2003-2004.

The participants – some personal information (false names)

Abram: A child psychologist and former nature guide; works in hospitals and health institutions, a bachelor in his early thirties.

Nil: A social worker and group counselor; works with families at risk and violent men in a government Welfare Centre; in his late twenties, newly married and father to a baby.

Miriam: A psychotherapist and family therapist, unmarried with an adopted son, in her forties.

Rachel: A social worker and a family therapist; works with families in a regional clinic and also has a private clinic at home; in her mid fifties, mother to four children.

Zara: An art therapist and former nature guide; works in a school and in a private clinic; in her mid forties, married and a mother of two children.

Tina: A school and group counselor; works in the private and organization sectors; married and a mother to three children, in her mid forties

Telma: An art therapist; works in a school and in a private clinic; in her mid forties, married and a mother of two children.

Epos: A nature photographer and nature guide; works for the National Geographic Magazine and for the private sector; in his mid forties, married and father of two children.

Sara: A social worker; works in a health maintenance organization; in her mid forties, married and mother of three children.

Shay: A group facilitator and educator; works in a youth movement; a bachelor in his early thirties.

Facilitation and supervision

The training was facilitated by Ronen Berger, the author of this Ph.D. and head of the Nature Therapy Centre, aged 34, a Drama and Body therapist, Ecologist and dancer. The work was supervised by Michal Doron, a Drama therapist,

Psychotherapist and supervisor working with a Zen-Buddhist orientation. Supervision was oriented both around the participants' process and around the theoretical concepts that the training had originally aimed at containing, exploring the ways the two could be combined in practice.

The place I came from (a reflexive statement)

'Between the circle and the cycle' was the first long training I have ever carried out and the one with the most complex structure. It took place after running a few 3-4 day intensive Nature Therapy trainings throughout that year; trainings that included accompanying research. Its analysis helped me re-construct the framework and articulate many fresh Nature Therapy concepts. As the first training that took place with the collaboration of Tel-Hai College, without being fully aware of it, it functioned as a form of pilot training, prior to the opening of the first year long training that started two months later. This fact, as well as my connection to and love of the participants, with whom I formed a meaningful relationship during that year, made me feel quite enthusiastic. In perspective, three years later, I can say that it taught me a lot about Nature Therapy and training: the way that structure and syllabus of training should be built and the style and atmosphere that should be designed accordingly. In addition, it was the first time I felt that I really had a professional community – colleagues who are enthusiastic about this approach and with whom I can form meaningful collaborations.

About the choice of structure and mode of work of the training

Appreciating the contribution of my Drama Therapy training, one that contained much experiential work and focused upon the process (and less upon theories) and acknowledging the strong experiential aspect of Nature Therapy, I thought that the training should be built in a similar way. This choice also related to the outcome of the analysis of previous trainings, which pointed out that one of the biggest difficulties trainees had in assimilating Nature Therapy, related to the spontaneous elements it contained and the 'not knowing' mode of facilitation. It seemed that most trainees felt they needed a more solid theory before they could incorporate Nature Therapy into their practice. In addition, at that point (and probably also today) I could not provide them with the solid framework they wanted, feeling

that the element which prevented them from practicing Nature Therapy or incorporating it in their workplaces related more to their ability or inability to trust 'what happens in the moment' and their tacit knowledge. With this in mind, I aimed to offer a meaningful, rich and authentic experience from which we could conceptualize and further develop the cognitive knowledge most of them desired.

The fact that the training was designed for therapists with sufficient theoretical and practical backgrounds supported this choice. I believed that previous knowledge could provide a structure to lean on and a framework into which Nature Therapy could be integrated. The fact that I knew most of the participants from previous Nature Therapy trainings, gave me a sense of confidence in this style of facilitation, knowing that the experiential and process-oriented style could also be a reason for criticism and dissatisfaction. The fact that the sub-heading of the original invitation to the training was 'an invitation to a facilitated Nature Therapy laboratory' reinforced me, as I hoped it would lower people's expectations that I would deliver knowledge and allow them to stay within the experiment, while constructing their own integrated framework. In fact, much of the framework this Ph.D. contains was conceptualized as a result of this training and subsequent research.

The structure of this Chapter

In order to provide readers as detailed as possible documentation of the process the Chapter includes three main components. Each comprises an in-depth description including:

1. A description of what was done during the workshop (action).
2. Facilitator's voice - relating to the actual workshop and its description; reflexive thoughts highlighting the personal subtext, interpretation and theory that influenced the way the workshop was designed and intervention choices that were made during it (from reflexivity to action).
3. Participant's voices - illustrating issues which emerged during the workshop and issues which emerged after it and were shared during the follow-up processing encounters (sharing and processing experiences).

4. Facilitator's voice – collecting the knowledge, feelings and thoughts that were shared, expanding their meanings and conceptualizing them (from action to interpretation & conceptualization).

This multi-dimensional text allows readers to look inside the complex process of knowledge generation, as it took place between the facilitator and participants in the here and now of the workshop, as well as by the researcher during the analytic process that took place after the training concluded. It not only explains the concepts and methods that were generated during the process, but also shows their implementation in practice. In addition, it's reflexive standpoint and the sharing of the facilitator's subtext highlights questions and complexities that can assist practitioners who are interested in integrating this work into their practice. This attitude can be related to as a fresh Action Research-oriented writing style; its density displays the connection between action and conceptualization; practice and theory generation.

Data analysis, coding and meaning making process

In order to provide readers information about the coding and categorizing of the data and to increase the amount of analytical commentary in the Chapter, connections are made between the categories that were generated in the analysis process and the text. These links between the participant's voices and the categories are made throughout the Chapter, and cross referenced to Table Number 2. As they aim to highlight the connection that exists between the two (rather than explicit, one-to-one connections) without harming the flow of the text, they are integrated into the flow and narrative of the chapter. As this connection aims at giving readers an idea of the ways in which these themes (categories) were expressed in action, each category is linked only to several quotes that demonstrate it. These references are made so that all categories are demonstrated by relevant quotes, and therefore run until through half/two-thirds of the chapter.

Table 2. Categories and Themes Generated from Analysis

T.2. Category 1. Themes that people were dealing with, or, themes that the training allowed participants to work on	Total: 43
T.2.1. maturation and individuation process	11
T.2.2. duality between feminine and masculine, young and old, strong and weak	10
T.2.3 feeling lonely and the need for partnership	9
T.2.4. questions about human-nature relationships	5
T.2.5. need for control	4
T.2.6. need in personal space in the family and relations	4
T.2. Category 2. Spiritual issues	Total: 21
T.2.7.magic, mystical experiences, connection to the inner child and to intuition	16
T.2.8. ways in which the cycles of nature connected to inner core, deep sensations, awareness and higher identity	5
T.2. Category 3. Issues regarding the training	Total: 44
T.2.9. questions about the relationship between theory and experience in the training	29
T.2.10. difficulties in the transition from the workshop to everyday life	8
T.2.11 questions that relate to boundaries – physical touch, hierarchy and intimacy between therapist and client/teacher and student	7

All in all, the Grounded Theory analysis produced 109 sub-categories, which were collected into three central categories, i.e. main meaning-making units. These categories include only sub-category's which had more then 4 coding units each.

Category 1. Themes people were dealing with and issues that the training allowed participants to work on

This category relates to the therapeutic and supportive impact that the training had on participants: helping them in the maturation and individuation process and dealing with duality (inner dialogue and conflicts between feminine and masculine, young and old), loneliness, and need for control. It also helped them explore the meanings they give to their relationships with nature.

Category 2. Spiritual issues

This category relates to magic and mystical experiences, as well as connection to the inner child and to intuition that the participants had during and after the workshop. It also relates to ways in which the cycles of nature connected the participants to their inner core, their deep sensations and their higher identity.

Category 3. Issues regarding the training

This category relates to participants' questions about the style of the training and the relationship it suggested between theory and experience. It also relates to questions about the mode of work; about boundaries of physical touch, hierarchy and intimacy between facilitator and participant, therapist and client. This category also relates to difficulties in the transition from the workshop to everyday life, as a relevant issue both for this model of training and to NT as a whole.

6.2 Workshop 1 (7th and 8th July 2004)

6.2.1 Aims of the Workshop

This first workshop aimed to introduce the concept of doing Nature Therapy on a full-moon night on the beach, using non-verbal, physical and creative modes of working. In addition, it aimed at creating a safe therapeutic group space, which could help people feel comfortable with each other and with the nature surrounding them, feelings which were necessary for the further development of the process. Being familiar with Gestalt concepts such as the 'here and now', 'figure and ground' and 'cycle of experience' (Kepner, 1987), I wanted to run the first workshop in a manner

that would provide a safe ground for the emergence of themes (figures from the ground); a way that would enable us to explore them more in-depth in future workshops. As such, I came with an open mind, aiming to provide an empty space for the group to project and explore their stories. In this line, I chose to use experimental activities that would allow each participant to find his/her own meaning and interest, rather than use a more direct or closed strategy that might lead them in a specific direction.

6.2.2 Arriving

Aiming to help participants make a gradual transition from their urban and functional everyday life into the workshop's natural environment and experiential mode of work, I asked them to gather at an intermediate zone, at the official entrance to the reserve; a location built by people. This area had all the technological amenities and symbols (such as a shade, electricity, toilet and snack bar), yet it was on the beach, in touch with the sand and the wind...

Having arrived at the beach (at 15:00) I found myself questioning my strict definition of setting: time and place of encounter, scheduled for 16:30. As it was the first week of the summer holiday, the beach was crowded by people of all ages including naked children (a usual sight on Israeli beaches) dogs (also a usual sight) and people playing volleyball... what meaning do the borders of 'therapeutic clock time' have here? Will it be possible to enter an intimate therapeutic space in such an informal setting?

I remembered that I had actually planned to work in a more remote area, but what would happen if it would also be occupied? Although I was used to working in an outdoor environment, I was accustomed to working in more private locations and without such a crowd... People were arriving gradually, not paying attention to my request to arrive 'on time' (a common thing in Israeli culture), so I joined this atmosphere and gave them time to wander around, get familiar with the surroundings, go for a swim, buy an ice cream and act.... By 17:00, when everyone had arrived, a very short opening talk took place, inviting people to fill up water

bottles and go to the toilet before moving away from this well-equipped zone into a distant part of the shore, separated from people and technological devices.

It was hot day, but the gentle wind provided a fresh sensation. The sea was calm and the scenery was beautiful.

6.2.3 First Circle – Place to Gather

After a few minutes drive, upon arrival at 'our quiet space' further north, I was happy to discover that it was almost deserted and the few people who occupied it did not plan to stay for the night. Using my feet, I drew a circle on the sand and invited people to gather around for a more official opening. There, as participants sat around the circle, the framework of the whole training was presented and the group contract was accepted. As people began to play with the sand, they were asked to say a few words about the personal place they came from including their expectations, fears and wishes. It became evident that participants had different needs, wishes and expectations regarding both personal and professional elements. Zara and Telma voiced their concern that the workshop becoming an academically-recognised training would make them 'too verbal or cognitive'; Rachel expressed her need to conceptualize, requesting the training include more than non-verbal and experiential work. Miriam related to the intensity of the workshops, voicing her need for personal space, and asking to keep a balance between personal and group space. Telma and Tina said that their main interest was their personal development, while Sara said that her interest was more on the professional level, hoping to gain practical 'intervention tools' (T.2.9). This sharing made me feel uncomfortable. I was aware of the fact that I would probably not be able to satisfy everyone's needs and especially the claim for solid theory. At the same time, their spontaneous play in the sand encouraged me and gave me hope... After the 'voices' were heard and legitimized, I reminded the group of the training's framework and asked then if we could agree upon a contract including a confidentiality agreement. Once it was agreed upon, it seemed that the group was ready to work.

Relating to the concept of therapy as a journey and to the impact that physical space has upon process (Chapter 2.3, Appendix 2.5 and 2.6) I asked the participants to get up, and head north. As I aimed to work within the fantastic and embodied reality, this physical transition from one location to another was used as a way to shift people's awareness and overall mode of being and to open the option of something new... in other words: changing the location and setting was used to help change people's perspective and state of mind.

6.2.4 Second Circle - Bridging with Nature, Summoning Physicality and Creativity

As the sun began to set, the wind increased and temperature decreased. Although the sea was still calm, the sounds of the waves became more dominant and stinging mosquitoes appeared. It was a special time, twilight time. Participants were heading north, walking alone, in couples or trios. As I stopped on the edge of the dry sand, several meters above the place where the waves met the shore, I drew a new circle where participants gathered. It was nice to discover how fast this 'circle ritual' was internalized. The option it gave me of gathering the group without using my voice was even nicer.

Being the first workshop, I wanted to help participants expand their ecological selves and their ability to be in touch with cosmic knowledge (Chapter 2.2, 2.3). I therefore taught them a series of physical exercises from Tai-Chi, Chi-Kong and Aikido emphasising breath, sense of space and connection to the earth and sky. Doing this, I asked them to allow their legs to deepen their roots into the sand and let their hands and bodies be moved by the wind. When this physical warm-up concluded, I asked them to make eye contact with someone else around the circle and change places, as a way to help people engage with each other and connect to their creativity. Upon reaching the new location, I asked them to draw or sculpt an image in the sand and name it, then make eye contact with someone else, tell him/her the creation's name, hear his/hers and walk into the other's creation. Working with knowledge that physical space holds some of the energy, narrative and knowledge of the person who 'just left it' (see Appendix 2.5), I asked them to pay attention to sensations, feelings and metaphors that flashed through them as they entered each other's space. Aiming to

support group bonding, while presenting the options of touching and playing, I asked the members to form 'body sculptures', adding on movement and voice. This evolved into a spontaneous game, in which someone would voice out a feeling such as fear, belonging and hope and the group would make a dynamic sculpture that represented it. Once everyone had a go at the game, taking roles of leader and follower, being on stage and being an audience, the game came to an end and the circle was reopened...

6.2.5 Third Circle – Figures in the Sand

As the moon was rising and the group walked away from the circle, Nil suggested setting off for a fast run. The group joined this spontaneous initiative, and it turned into a 'group-bonding' activity, exploring the pace and style of running, allowing all members to participate. After about 1km, the group slowed down and spontaneous games in the shallow water began, sprinkling water on each other and playing children's games. Seeing this playfulness and creative mode of being, made me happy, as I drew another circle in the sand signaling to participants where to gather. Trusting that enough 'ground' had been found during the hours that had passed, I asked participants to sculpt an image which represented an issue or question they came to explore in the workshop. I was happy to discover that despite my worries about such instructions being 'vague', participants had no problem understanding and connecting to the previous work, created in a non-judgmental and childlike space. I asked each one to look at his/her sculpture and introduce its name to the group. During this activity, as people were sharing, a big wave came along and washed over the entire space causing laughter and confusion... Trying to keep my centre and find a way to incorporate this event for the benefit of the process, I asked participants to stand still, and explore the way in which 'the world' had re-shaped their creation. The moment had a strong impact, and Telma shared:

"I cannot believe what has just happened. I sculpted my family's home thinking that was the issue I wanted to explore in the workshop, when the wave washed it away. It's amazing, since that is exactly what happens with my partner, we build something together and then a wave comes and washes it away... It seems that our relationship is constantly being reframed, navigating between three forces: me, him and the world outside. Perhaps this is the real issue I would like to explore here – my relationship with him and with the world outside ..." (T.2.3 & T.2.8).

As other group members identified with Telma's story and shared similar stories, it became clear that this issue, trying to keep the balance between personal and collective needs and ways of dealing with this, is a shared one; perhaps one that the workshop will deal with... As I was not clear about the level of intimacy the circle contained, I asked people to pair off into couples and take time to complete their sharing. Having concluded their sharing, a break was declared. Some went to bring food and sleeping gear from their cars and others began making a fire.

I was happy with this circle, not only because of the manner in which it illustrated a way we can work with the concept of 'the three-way relationship' (Chapter 2.3), but also since I felt that I had started gaining wider knowledge of collective issues that the entire training process could be built around. This understanding gave me confidence that my original choice of 'coming without knowing' and staying with the moment seemed worthwhile.

Working without a watch, I did not know the exact time, but by the light of the full moon, it seemed like it was around 23:00. There were no other people in sight and only the sound of the waves and wind were present. As it was the beginning of the green and brown sea-turtles egg-laying season, I hoped that we would see one. It was quite a deep longing I had, to witness such a magical moment.

6.2.6 Fourth Circle – Stepping into a Nature Therapist's Shoes

Around midnight, after tea was drunk around the fire, I asked the participants whether they would like to keep on conversing, using verbal communication as the main way of working or move to more experiential work. Since people were interested to continue on to non-verbal work, I decided to offer another mind-body activity, one that would deepen their connection with cosmic energy and knowledge (Chapters 2.2, 2.3). With reference to the context of the training and the development of practical knowledge, I asked if they would be interested to continue working in couples, playing with the image of therapist - client. This suggestion appealed to them, so I invited them to form a line facing the sea, standing in couples one behind the other: the person who stood in front played the role of the 'client' and the person who stood behind took the role of the therapist. Then, after the 'therapists' were guided to cover

the 'client's' legs with sand, providing grounding and support, I asked them to place their hands on the 'client's' crown and gradually move them downwards: the forehead, neck, heart, stomach, pelvis, knees and feet, moving through the chakras. While the 'therapists' were doing this work, I facilitated an 'awareness-expanding activity' asking 'clients' to open their senses: listen to the wind and waves, sense the sea and be aware of their feelings and sensations. When the 'therapists' finished, I asked them to put their hands on the 'client's' shoulders and hold them for a while, then to let go and let their clients go and 'do as they wanted'. As this activity concluded, the group gathered for a short sharing, giving space to hear people's experience.

Tina: "Soon after the exercise started I began to swing. In the beginning I thought it was the wind but then I realized it could not have been since it felt like I was moving in all directions. I do not know if I was really moving or whether it was only an inner sensation. Now, I feel strange – as if I have grown longer, wider and deeper, how do I look?" (T.2.8).

Zara: "I felt my body become heavy and painful. I wanted to move but felt as if my legs were planted in the ground, I wanted to speak but the words didn't come out. Lying on the sand at the end of the activity gave me a deep sense of calmness; it felt like I had returned home, back to the womb..." (T.2.8).

As the work touched experiences and dimensions that were new to the participants, I felt that a rational explanation or theory would help them to ground their experiences and keep them from being overwhelmed. Therefore, I presented the concepts of the 'ecological self' (Chapters 2.2, 2.3) and 'touching nature' (Chapter 2.2), highlighting the potential that exists within the meta-physical connection with nature. Being aware of the oddness, perhaps new age attitude of the ideas, I turned to a more familiar concept, talking about the impact of working in creative ways, turning to our right hemisphere of the brain, and the use of intuition, imagination and emotions rather than keeping to our more common use of the left – cognitive side (Lahad, 2002). As this cognitive talk 'organized' the participants, I asked them to return to their couples and go back to the location in which they had carried out the 'hands on work'. Then, working with the idea that the space holds their work, I asked them to re-define a space in the sand, a physical border and container for their future work. Each couple marked a territory, separating it from the others. I asked them to continue the role

play: One person as a 'therapist' and the other as a 'client'. Once deciding who would take which role and negotiating a contract, the 'therapists' were instructed to build the work according to their own preference, while integrating the concept of 'the three-way relationship: client-therapist-nature'. I asked them to include 'nature' as an active partner in the process, using it in whatever way they felt right. A few 'therapists' expressed anxiety at this vague and open guidance, so I invited them to take the stand of an active and supportive witness and 'play' with their 'clients'. I asked them not to worry about 'making mistakes' but rather listen to their intuition, allowing themselves to be inspired by their clients and by the nature surrounding them. At the same time I asked the 'clients' to take an active position and to tell their 'therapist' what their needs were and in what way they would like their therapist to 'be with them'. This option allowed participants (counselors by profession) to re-examine their standpoints on the issue of hierarchy and knowledge in therapy and the ways in which intuition and spontaneity can be used in practice. In addition, this exercise allowed them a chance to encounter one-on-one nature oriented therapy, a form of working that we had not touched before. As this activity concluded, we came back to the circle for a final sharing:

Tina: "Telma and I decided we want to stay in equal positions, so we built a circle shaped like a womb, entered it and lay down facing each other, each in a bundling posture. After a while I woke up and realized I had fallen into a deep sleep. It was a special feeling being with myself and with the other at the same time, sharing an intimate experience with my partner, and simultaneously feeling contained by the facilitator, the group and the vastness of the night".

Miriam: "I dug a big hole in the sand and then entered it. Zara (playing the therapist) watched my work and then helped me to enter the hole and cover myself with sand. It was wonderful to feel that even though we did not talk or have a previous acquaintance, Zara really knew what I needed and supported my journey in a very simple and present way. This experience connected with the magical sensation that had accompanied me since the earlier work, providing a unique sense of belonging and partnership" (T.2.2. & T.2.7).

After closing, a sharing talk was held around the fire allowing people to say something about their present feelings, thoughts or sensations; making sure that

everyone felt all right. A sleeping break was declared. Around 3:00 A.M. people located themselves around the fire, opened their sleeping bags and went to sleep. For me, believing in the knowledge that is embedded in the actual natural space, it is important to say that sleeping on the beach, in the location where the process took place is an important part of the process. It gives 'processing time' and furthermore, it allows the processing work (and dream work) to be influenced by the elements of nature: the cyclic sounds of the waves, the energy of the full moon etc. I took out my sleeping bag and went to sleep near the fire. The moon was still in the middle of the sky and the temperature was pleasant. Tired as I was, making full body contact with the soft sand, felt great. I was at peace.

6.2.7 Fifth Circle – Sunrise

At 4:30 my alarm clock rang. I washed my face in the water, made fire and stretched. It was still dark, but I could already sense the first rays of light. I took the tea I prepared off the fire and woke the participants, inviting them to take private 'awakening' time.

Nil and Epos departed for one direction, as Zara and Miriam – departed in the opposite direction and took a short swim in the sea. Rachel was walking along the beach, while Sara and Telma stayed near the fire. As people came back from their short journeys and gathered around the re-drawn, last circle it became evident that now that the sun was up we could see each other clearly, after seeing only shadows before. As Rachel called attention to our bare feet, funny remarks were made regarding the long toes of the facilitator and about the oddness of this unusual situation.

Rachel: "In all my years as a social worker I have never looked at my client's feet. I do admit that my eyes could have bumped into them occasionally, probably in a time of boredom or embarrassment. Now, receiving legitimization, it seems quite interesting..." (T.2.11).

This spontaneous mode led to another non-verbal activity in which the participants were asked to use their right hand to sense the left hand of the person standing on their right, imagining that his/her hand is a landscape: rock, tree, sand etc;

exploring the different textures which make up this human nature. At the same time, giving their left hand to the person on their left, allowing it to be touched and sensed in the same way. This activity: touching and being touched at the same time, sensing nature and 'being nature' increased the intimacy as people got physically closer and began to lean on each other. After what took place in that moment, spontaneous singing began as lullabies, songs from the Bible and songs from basic Israeli heritage entered the circle. The collective singing which took place in the intermediate zone, where the waves broke, raised people's excitement, as they were invited to take a moment to think of an element they would be taking with them with from the workshop, trying to make it as concrete as possible:

Miriam: "As I start my year's sabbatical I want to sculpt again. Now I sense how much I have missed it: touching the rocks and the excitement which I got out of seeing the way a creation is being made". (T.2.7).

Tina: "Being a mother to three children and a freelance counselor leaves me very little time for myself. I have decided to make space for myself: an hour in nature every day!" (T.2.1.).

Telma: "I am going to ask my husband to 'be with me' in simple ways, not only when we talk about dramatic family issues but also when we watch T.V or eat a meal. It's a long time since we have been truly together" (T.2.3).

Rachel: "I know I want to create. I still do not know what but I hope that future work will help me to reveal it". (T.2.7).

After the sharing was completed, I asked people to turn around by 180 degrees and face nature 'outside' and to observe the horizon. Then I asked them to turn back and face each other again.

As Nil offered to conclude the workshop with a 'power' movement (one which most Israelis know from preliminary school) everyone placed their hands in the centre and then opened the circle with the lifting of the hands towards the sky shouting 'ha'...

Around 9:00, as the temperature was rising, breakfast was declared. During this time a more casual conversation about careers developed. After the gear was packed, Epos asked the others to help him clean up some of the rubbish in the location which had hosted us during the night. He said that he felt this was the least we could

do in return for the generous hosting we had received. I was happy to hear this and observe the way in which people happily joined in, as it supported my belief that doing Nature Therapy can help foster a sense of love and care for nature (without the need to talk about nature conservation in a concrete way).

Having concluded this, I made sure everyone was familiar with the details of the processing meeting and with the procedure of the non-facilitated follow-up talks. Then, the group dispersed, as people made their way back to the car park and their journey back home.

I observed the way in which people used this time to 'collect' themselves: packing bags, collecting rubbish, making the journey back to their cars and saying goodbye to each other and to me. It made me think of a way in which the concept of therapy as a journey can be used to help people make the gradual transition back home to their everyday life and urban environment.

6.2.8 Processing and Conceptualization - Encounter 1 (22.7.04) – 'Between Spaces'

6.2.8.1 The place I came from

After the workshop, in preparation for the meeting I asked myself different, funny questions: What should I wear; formal 'indoors therapist', city clothes or informal 'nature' ones? But, what are, actually, the nature's therapist clothes?

Other, more important questions related to the style and content of the facilitation:

How much space should I devote to personal process, allowing people to share their experience and use the group for personal development, and how much theory should I give? Should I prepare a lecture explaining the concepts and techniques that were used in the workshop or should I come 'open handed' and let the issues emerge, inviting participants to make their own meanings, while using the collective experience as a way to construct broader knowledge? To what extent can I share these questions with them, inviting them to take an active part in the shaping of the training and process without confusing them? What kind of relationship do they expect from me – a friend, colleague, therapist, teacher or supervisor? What do I want from them?

6.2.8.2 The actual encounter

The three-hour processing and conceptualization meeting took place in Tina's home, two weeks after the workshop. This time people arrived on time, an issue that caught my attention not just in terms of 'Israeli culture' (people having different interpretations to the issue of being on time) but also as they made it from different parts of the country including remote locations. They seemed happy to meet each other, and I got a sense that the workshop had created a powerful bond between the people; a sense of togetherness. I was also happy to discover that a collective dinner was arranged as each brought some food he/she had prepared at home. Tina's home gave us a warm and homely feeling. After we had gathered, I started by presenting the framework I had (finally) decided upon: half of the meeting would give space for sharing and personal process and the other half would be devoted to theory and conceptualization, using notes I had prepared at home as the basis for conversation and mutual conceptualization. I also mentioned the style of learning we agreed upon: using personal experience as a way to engage with existing Nature Therapy theory, while using collective meaning that emerges from the exploration of the experience to generate new concepts. Referring to people's different needs and styles of learning, I asked them to be active in the construction of the meeting and to create the 'right' balanced way to integrate processing and conceptualizing. As this framework was introduced in the letter that was sent to participants prior to the training, and as it was repeated in the opening circle of the workshop, people accepted it readily and the meeting started.

6.2.8.3 Making the transition from workshop to everyday environment

(T.2.10)

The first and most dominant issue that was voiced by the participants related to the complexity of the transition from the workshop's environment, atmosphere and way of being to everyday life. The first one to open the circle was Tina, saying that she was really waiting for this meeting and she had to share: "*I experienced a big difficulty making the transition back home. I expected the same quality of love,*

listening and intimacy would continue at home and when my partner did not fulfill my expectations, I become upset and sad. How do you deal with that?" (T.2.10).

Identifying with Tina's story, Telma said: *"As I came home I felt I was receiving many insights. I know they were very important, touching the deepest parts of me. Facing everyday life I felt a sense of impotence, not knowing how to integrate this new knowledge into the 'real world'. It is a strange feeling: like there is 'me on the beach' and a different 'me' during the everyday" (T.2.8 & T.2.10).*

Interested to hear more, I asked Tina to talk more about this experience. Tina was happy to continue and said: "When I returned I felt I have a very strong centre, like I really know who I am and what I want from life. Then, as the days passed this feeling defused and changed into the familiar not-knowing state of 'me'". Relating to her former description Tina said: "Hearing you now, I realize I also experienced some kind of shock, as I have three young kids and there is hardly any time to adjust". Most participants identified with these experiences, normalizing these reactions while raising questions regarding the ways in which this 'shock' can be diminished and about ways in which the learning from the workshop can be integrated into the everyday life. Relating to this question

Zara shared: "After participating in a few Nature Therapy trainings I learned to take time, to let the Nature Therapy 'bubble' defuse and integrate into my 'normal' life. My family knows that I will return home in a tired and hallucinated mode, so they try to help me and give this time. I normally take a shower, close the door to my room and write thoughts and insights. I guess I have formed a kind of transition and reflecting ritual aimed at highlighting the things I received from the workshop".

Tina: "Yes, I can relate to that; after I balanced myself some kind of magic took place, I was full of love for my children and partner, and nothing could upset me. Still, as a counselor, I felt there is a big gap between the two realities and wondered what could be done to help integrate them".

I felt this was an important issue, so I added that some of its complexity can be attributed to the transition from the 'right hemisphere way of being' during the workshop to the 'left hemisphere way of being' in everyday life (using verbal and

cognitive modes) and that indeed, it can cause 'inner conflicts' and challenge choices and ways of living (Lahad, 2002).

It seemed that these responses, made by the participants and facilitator calmed the emotions triggered by Miriam, as she shared another meaning that the workshop had given her:

"I was really waiting to meet you all again; you gave me a unique sense of belonging as you surrounded and cradled me during the workshop. The time we shared together on the beach gave me an opportunity to feel part of and be supported by others. It was really important to discover this need. At the same time, returning to my empty home made me feel very lonely and sad. It brought back issues which I knew in my past and highlighted again the complexity of the choice to stay single. In this respect, the talks I had with other group members did not only help me process the workshop, but allowed me to feel that you all are still with me and that I am not alone. Having this continuity was empowering". (T.2.2. & T.2.12.).

Relating to this Nil said:

"The 'one-on-one' in-between, non-facilitated talks helped me to re-connect to the workshop's experience and engage it with my everyday reality. It was nice to hear your voices as you became friends and partners in a journey".

Relating to that, I added that hearing the way the group supported each other, sharing and normalizing mutual experiences, strengthened my impression that a real bonding had taken place. In fact, as Miriam noted, it can be that the separation from the group and the return to people outside it made the transition harder.

6.2.8.4 Exploring boundaries (T.2.11)

As the talk extended, it moved from personal issues to exploring issues of boundaries and hierarchy in Nature Therapy.

Miriam started this dialogue and said:

"There was something strange in your position (talking to the facilitator): on one hand it was very clear that you were the facilitator, constructing the space, taking care of time and safety, giving us guidance and navigating the process, while at the same time it felt as if we were equal partners in the journey. During the workshop, I

did not think of this issue but now reflecting upon it from a distanced 'therapist' perspective it opens up questions regarding the issue of boundaries in psychotherapy, in general, and Nature Therapy, in particular".

Relating to Miriam's remark Zara said:

"Coming from the clinical perspective, I can really relate to what Miriam said. After attending a few Nature Therapy trainings, I feel that the natural setting provides a simple humanistic atmosphere which gives the therapeutic encounter a completely different orientation than the indoor clinical one. Personally, this open atmosphere allows me to feel more freedom as I acknowledge the facilitator not only as a 'therapist' but as a 'real person'. In fact many times I wonder who needs the strict clinical boundaries: the client or the therapist?"

As this discussion developed Tina said:

"For me the whole issue is very simple. Look at us now, all smartly dressed and perfumed; in the workshop we all wore simple clothes. At best, we used deodorant. In the morning, all of us including the facilitator were tired, dirty and with a heavy 'bonfire smell'. I believe that working in an open space such as the beach is quite a different setting than the indoors, clinical one. It seems to me that if a therapist would try to impose his/her 'clinical boundaries' and hierarchy on this setting s/he would simply destroy the magic of this unique encounter".

Continuing the conversation Nil added that actually, he would probably find it non-authentic if a therapist working in nature would maintain the distanced attitude of working indoors. He said that the issue of 'being real' is very important for him both from a therapist's and a client's point of view. Extending the discourse into the issue of physical touch he said:

"Physical touch was another example of the way the work extended the issue of boundaries. It helped me to let go of some of my defense mechanisms, as I felt I was held and cared for by others".

Rachel joined Nil and said

"The permission and guidance to use touch were really important to me as they supported the creation of intimacy, trust and playfulness".

Voicing another dimension of this issue, Tina said that she sometimes felt that touch was imposed upon her. At the same time, the options of a dialogue with a partner made her become aware of her need for personal space during intense group process.

Since I felt that boundaries and hierarchy in Nature Therapy were some of the major issues I wanted to deal with, I said that I was happy the subject came up as I was worried that this 'taboo issue' would remain untouched. I also said that for me, coming from a background of contact improvisation, dance, and body therapy, I find touch inherent to any form of therapy. At the same time I can understand that most psychotherapeutic discourse leaves it out of and totally understand this 'taboo' standpoint.

6.2.8.5 Between theory and process (T.2.9).

At this stage, Rachel shared her difficulties about the lack of sufficient theory to justify this approach: "The physical work connected me with a previous conversation I had with you (talking to the facilitator) regarding the place of spirituality and energetic work within therapy. I feel I am touching a new dimension which I really would like to hear about in a more grounded way. I think this is one of the main issues I came to explore here and I do not feel it received enough attention". After this statement, Miriam said that she believed that most learning comes from personal work and that this is what she wishes for in this case. Sara joined Rachel's perspective and said that she would like to get a wider theoretical foundation and less processing, not turning the training into therapy. As the conversation turned into an argument Tina said: "Having the background of an organizational consultation, I feel like an outsider when counselors start talking in psychotherapeutic terms. Personally, I am much more interested in personal dialogue than a distanced academic one and I would not like it to happen here". I chose to relate to this statement in two ways: a personal sharing and a dynamic observation. I opened by saying that much of the physical work we did related to knowledge I had gained through practicing dance and bodywork and that it also included ideas that came spontaneously. As such, I could not explain what we did by using articulated theory and in this point might disappoint them. Seeking an explanation, I shared my reflections and said that it seemed that what I was doing was integrating all the knowledge I have gained in the past into one

framework, using my intuition as a way to bridge them all. Yet, I would like to use this space to invite the participants to explore whether their need for such theories limits their ability to be 'in the moment' and use their tacit knowledge.

6.2.8.6 A shared love for nature (T.2.4.)

After Tina's invitation to talk about personal issues Epos said:

"Even though I have been working with many people in nature for the last twenty years, I feel that what drew me to Nature Therapy and to this training is my love and connection to nature". Sara joined and said: "This is the first time in my life I am in a group in which the issue of the personal connection with nature is being raised. It is great to feel part of a group where this connection fosters one of its central bonding elements. I feel as if an important part of me has found a home".

Others talked about their feelings towards nature, sharing personal meaningful experiences; it became evident that this basic love of nature was an element shared by all the participants. Talking about this issue openly made me happy, as I felt that I had also reached the home I had longed for. After I shared those feeling with the group and acknowledged that this is, in fact, part of becoming a professional community – having a mutual love and excitement for a basic element in the discipline, I announced that the first session was about to conclude and asked if anyone wanted to say something before it ends.

6.2.8.7 Who is responsible for the process?

After a moment of silence Tina said:

"I really wanted to share my experience but your (talking the facilitator) vague way of opening the session, not leading it to any specific direction confused me and made me feel that it is not the right place for that".

Relating to this Miriam said:

"Personally I think that the dynamics of the conversation represents our group dynamics. Perhaps since it is the first indoors encounter and we hardly know each

other it feels safer to focus on professional issues and not expose our vulnerabilities. Personally, I like this open mode of working, as it allows participants to take more responsibility over the process".

As the conversation developed, I said that it seemed that this dialogue related to the question of participant influence and responsibility over the process, in general, and about the balance between personal process and the study of theory in particular. Relating to the context of the encounter, being the first processing meeting in the training, I pointed out that it seemed that these questions also relate to questions revolving around the 'training contract' and about the style and mode of working it will include. I also said that I am happy that competitiveness between participants and confrontations with the facilitator had emerged, as they are essential for the development of the group towards greater intimacy and deeper work.

As the two hours dedicated to this unit were over, the facilitator asked to sum up the session and take a break. During the break, he readjusted the lecture he had planned with the elements which had come up in the conversation. After the break, the meeting shifted into a more lecture/discussion format relating to the way in which the workshop had been constructed.

6.2.8.8 Discussion and conclusions – first indoors encounter

An exploration of this follow-up encounter shows that it was mainly centred on different aspects of the issue of boundaries: between the workshop's natural space and everyday space, intuition and cognition, the therapist and the client, the personal, professional and the theoretical. This inquiry was needed in order to form inner boundaries, in a setting that lacks the common definitions present in an indoors, clinical setting. The exploration also symbolized the way in which the absence of such boundaries can widen the options of exploring them from additional perspectives, while raising some of the complexities that this openness contains. In addition, it seems that this multi-dimensional exploration gave participants a different opportunity to get to know each other, while questioning and discussing issues which were relevant to the group contract, the aims of the workshop and future ways of working.

6.3 Workshop 2 (5th-6th August 2004)

6.3.1 Aims in Planning this Workshop

My aim in the second workshop was to introduce the idea of working in 'the cosmic sandbox': integrating story-making and spontaneous play in the sand, and at the same time incorporating the dialogue with 'nature' in a way that would allow a creative exploration of personal issues.

6.3.2 Arriving

In accord with the concept of the intermediate zone, I chose to meet the participants at the same location we had met for the first workshop, near the official entrance to the reserve. The place was chosen in order to help participants make the transition from everyday life to the workshop environment, as well as to give them a sense of familiarity and continuity; maintaining a flow between the location of the first encounter one month ago and the present moment. It was a hot day, the sea was quiet and only few people were present.

Participants not only arrived on time, they also came prepared; equipped with water and gear. It seemed they were eager to meet the sea and as they felt safe with each other, they asked if they could take non-facilitated time until the last person arrived and meet me in the isolated location where we had worked last time. I rather liked the idea of giving people some private time in nature while I was still waiting for Shay, a new group member who was joining us. I thought of agreeing to their request, but at the same time I was worried what would happen if I would not find them or, worse, if someone would drown. Therefore, I told them that they can go as long as they stay out of the water and be at the place where we met last time in one hour. I suggested they use this time to get re-acquainted with the environment and explore what images, feelings, sensations and thoughts drew their attention. In addition I asked them to be attentive to elements that remained the same and others that had changed. When I saw them walk away, I regretted not having a co-facilitator in this workshop, not only for the counseling skills he/she could contribute, but also for my own and the group's emotional and physical sense of safety.

A few minutes later, Shay arrived and joined me and we moved to the 'isolated location'. Shay asked if he could also take some private time and I agreed. After a short walk I saw the group, a fact that calmed me down and allowed me to enjoy the time I had been granted with nature. As the hour passed, the heat decreased and a gentle wind began to blow. Several people were playing paddle ball and the group members gradually returned and sat outside the new circle that was drawn on the sand...

6.3.3 First Circle – Creating and Entering the Circle

It was difficult to focus the group and 'enter the work'. I did not know if it was the movement of passing jeeps, the fact that Shay (known to most participants from previous trainings), had joined us, something in me or the surroundings, or perhaps a combination of all of these. Therefore, I stood up and drew a second circle around the group, placing the group between the two circles. Then I asked them to close their eyes and sense the wind, sand, and sun. Using guided imagination, I directed them back to the first workshop and asked them to reflect upon dominant figures: a person with whom they had made a connection, a natural element which had drawn their attention, a feeling, sensation or thought which they remembered. Then, as they opened their eyes I invited them to say something about their feelings regarding coming to the present workshop.

Sara, who had just joined the training, said that she had arrived like an empty shopping basket – wanting to receive and learn. Miriam said that she came with mixed feelings as she had closed her clinic today getting ready for her sabbatical. Miriam also said that she felt really happy as she had just come back from a week's holiday with the family in Sinai. After the short sharing, I presented the day's framework and made sure that everyone was familiar with the group contract. As the sun descended, some physical exercises were taken. Since the group was scattered around, I aimed the activity not only at opening up the body and connecting it to the energy of nature, but also at focusing the group and causing them to bond. I incorporated some 'building trust' exercises, asking people to hold hands and lean outwards, as if they are physically responsible for their own holding. The activity centred the group and sharpened its collective spirit.

As jeeps were still moving on the beach around us, I continued with (physical) activities from Aikido and Chi-Kong, creating a stronger (personal and group) centre and focus. After a while, it became evident that our footprints spontaneously marked a third circle inside the previous two that by now contained us all. Using this momentum as a way to voice out subconscious metaphors, I invited the participants to jump into the centre of all circles, take time to be there and tell the group what s/he imagined, felt or thought.

Epos, being the first one to jump in, related to a concrete element and said: Sea. Nil jumping in at the same time as Telma, related to a dynamic situation and shouted Competition, as Telma shouted back Partnership. All group members took part in the game, until it came to an end leaving the group with feelings of playfulness and a stronger sense of bonding.

6.3.4 Second Circle - Digging for Metaphors

As the circle opened, the group turned to a more remote part of the beach, heading in the direction where the previous workshop had taken place. After about a twenty-minute walk, as the sun was beginning to sink into the sea, participants stopped at a new location, clear of any footprints. Using this stop on the half-wet sand, I drew a new circle and waited for people to join. Then aiming to extend the previous work and introduce the idea of 'playing within the cosmic sandbox', I asked each participant to take time and enter the circle, making a simple sculpture or drawing, return to his/her place and invite another member to name his/her work. Nil dug a hole in the sand, covered it and left the circle. Zara accepted Nil's invitation and named his work Secret. Miriam waited a few seconds before she called it Grave. This way of using the group as an active audience allowed the participant to hear different perspectives and interpretations of his/her work, without having to do any more work or to reveal a specific story. In this respect, the client becomes a witness and then becomes an active story-teller. At the same time, the situation where these interpretations are given in a circle by different participants (and not only by the group facilitator) creates a feeling of partnership and flattening of hierarchies, as it reduces

the dominant voice of the facilitator, while allowing the client to choose the person to comment on his/her work.

After a while, as people engaged with this repetitive activity, Epos drew a Mandala symbol and Nil began to sing a traditional Hebrew song: "The entire universe is a very narrow bridge, a very narrow bridge... and the main thing is not to be afraid". Everyone joined in this well known song. The group was guided to look at the horizon and witness the peak moment of sunset. The combination of singing the prayerlike-song and witnessing the sunset created a unique experience of sacredness and togetherness. As people came closer to each other and the singing died out, I used the metaphor of this specific prayer as a corridor to enter personal work. After making this choice, I asked participants to take private time around the circle and construct a bridge in the sand and sit next to it. As people finished building their individual bridges and sat next to them for enough time, a break was declared. Some people went to bring the sleeping gear and food from the cars and others made a fire, while others wandered around. It was dark and there were no sign of any jeeps...

6.3.5 Third Circle – What Hides in the Shadows?

Tea is drunk around the fire and people are conversing in 'small talk' around the circle. I wonder how people feel and in what direction I should continue the work. Have they had enough? Are they bored, or, perhaps frightened by something that unfolded and was exposed during the play in the sand? I feel confused and a bit lost, so I open this question to the group, asking participants to share their experience and say something about the way they would like to continue. Sara began by saying she did not understand what I meant by what way we would like to go and why can't we simply go on? *"Aren't you the facilitator here, why then should we decide?"* Shay joined Sara's words and said that he expected a clearer style of leadership and that he does not like my vague facilitation style. *"I came here to learn something about Nature Therapy from you and I feel like you keep asking me for directions"*. Zara said that the more we talk the more she feels that the magic which was here before disappears. *"Can we go on with the work and stop this talking? Coming here I meant to move away from group dynamics and tiring talk and I realize they are also present here. It gives me a headache"*. Feeling overwhelmed by this 'attack', I asked the

participants if they were worried or afraid of something that had happened or might happen and in case they are could they say something about it. Miriam said that suddenly she was not clear if this was a training workshop or a therapy session: *"without paying attention I have realized that the work we did before had become very personal and I do not know if this is what I came here for. This is only the third time we meet and I do not know how much I can trust you"*. Continuing along this line, Telma said that there was something strange in the transition from group talk to individual talk. *"All of a sudden I feel as if I am really being seen and heard without the camouflage of the group. The darkness made it even stronger, as I felt that people could really hear my voice. I know the bridge is still waiting for me there (pointing to the location of the previous work) but I am not sure I want to meet, or share what I might encounter there. On one hand, this way of playing in the sand is fun but at the same times surprising things can come out..."* Hearing this, I said I was happy that these voices were being shared and that indeed this playful mode of working in the sand bypasses defense mechanisms, while allowing personal issues, archetypes and metaphors to be unfolded and expressed. Sharing my own interpretation, I said that it is not surprising that the group had stopped and raised questions about the level of trust it contained, because they had (suddenly) realized that this game unfolded deep personal issues. This ventilation and explanation seemed to help people make sense of their experiences; the tension loosened and people felt happier. Rachel said *"now I understand why we didn't like to take responsibility over our own process and why we expressed this anger at you. It's interesting to see how we, a group of experienced therapists go through parallel process to the dynamics of the groups that we work with back home; how we are also dependent on the facilitator, afraid of intimacy and the unknown"*.

Aiming to make room for the remaining tension that remained within the participants' bodies, I asked people to get up as I drew a big circle in the soft sand. Then I asked the participants to enter the circle and present their feelings dramatically: group dynamics, personal issues or any other matters they might be juggling inside. The men were the first to enter the activity, and it turned into some kind of fighting game that changed into a strange form of dance. When the women and I joined in, it

turned into sand wrestling. After a short while, Nil declared loudly that it seems that it was a good time to stop this mess and continue...

6.3.6 Stories in the Sand

After people calmed down, I called everyone to join me at the sea line. Then I asked the group to stand in the shallow water and pay attention to the cyclic rhythm of the waves (listen and feel). Then, after the same Chakra activity we did in the first workshop (a shorter variation), I used the Six Piece Story Making framework (Lahad, 1992) to guide a simple imaginary journey: "Pick out one star and look at it for a while".

1. How old is the star (or a person or animal on it)?
2. Where did it come from?
3. On what kind of journey – mission is it (or the people – animals on it), what is its quest?
4. What kind of obstacle stands in its (their) way?
5. What or who can help it (them) in this quest /overcome the obstacle?
6. What happens in the future or what happens in the end?

When this exercise concluded, I asked the participants to return to the bridges they had built before and sit or stand next to them, then to imagine that the bridge on the sand is symbolic of a bridge (or crossroad) they faced in their life (past, present or future) and imagine themselves at this point. Then, to use the elements (sand and water) to create a three-dimensional representation that would relate to the six questions I had asked before. As people began to work, I made a fire in the centre of the former circle, at the place where Epos had drawn the Mandala. After a while, as people finished their work and gathered around the fire, I asked them to divide into groups of three and use the following format to explore each other's work:

One person, the one who created the presentation, shares the story.

A second person plays the role of therapist; asking questions from an artistic and narrative point of view,

The third person is a witness.

As I moved between the groups and witnessed the process, I encouraged the 'therapists' to stay with the most dominant metaphors which emerged from the art forms and keep their questions focused on the creative process. This way of working aimed to help the participants bridge the fantastic world, symbolized by metaphors and symbols and the physical and the concrete world, expressed by creation in the sand. This playful exploration not only invited participants to observe personal narratives and issues which had been externalized and embodied in the sand, but gave them a chance to shape and re-shape them. This externalization of an inner story or conflict can help clients address their 'problems' from a more distanced, safe perspective (Hazot, 2004), assisting them to explore alternative ways of living or other ways to 'to solve' their problems (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

Nil's work was constructed from two separate sculptures surrounded by two different boundaries and a half-built bridge between them. As Zara asked him about his work, he said that it represented his current relationship with his partner: *"we live in two separate worlds not succeeding in finding the way to bridge between them"*. Zara continued and asked for the reason why the bridge was only half built. Nil replied that whenever he tried to build the top of the bridge it collapsed: *"I really want the two parts to unite, but it seems that this sand has wishes of its own"* (T.2.2.& T.2.5).

This is an example of the concept of the 'concrete symbol', relating to how a concrete image highlights the story and personal dynamic it unfolds (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Berger, 2005). In Nil's work, the transparency of the two separate sculptures helped to unfold the story of the disconnection between him and his partner. In addition, situations in which 'nature' (and not the therapist or participants) is responsible for changes in the presentation (like the collapse of the bridge) allow the client to work on issues such as chaos, confusion and aggressiveness. Issues such as this may be difficult to project on to the therapist, or difficult for the therapist to contain. The sand (and nature), can be addressed as a projection zone not only between the client and therapist (Ryce-Menuhim, 1993) but furthermore, between the client and the world. This way of working may open a transpersonal dialogue offering alternative angles to deal with issues of loss, misfortune and other issues that may be hard to understand logically.

As the group finished the rotation, I asked each trio to make a small performance integrating elements from everybody's work into one dramatic creation. This transition into a 'doing' and performance state aimed to open up another perspective to the process, as well as to help people connect and identify with each other. After the stories were performed around the fire a 'sleeping break' was declared, allowing people two-three hours sleep before sunrise.

6.3.7 Fourth Circle - The Sunrise Brings New Meaning

The first beams of sun made their way above the mountains. A few sea gulls were standing near us looking for food that we might have left. I put on my jacket and came out of the sleeping bag. Sand crabs were still running around enjoying the time out of their tunnels, before entering them again. The sea was calm and the wind was not blowing. Everyone was still asleep. I made a fire and started waking up people to come and drink tea. I wanted to use the concept of the three-way relationship client-therapist-nature (Berger & McLeod, 2006): to give people time to do personal work with nature (without other people's direct involvement) while using nature's independent dynamic as a way to open up the process to additional dimensions. I invited the participants to take personal time and revisit their presentations. I asked them to be aware of elements in their work which stayed the same, as opposed to others that had changed. Acknowledging the ways imagination-work can have upon 'real' and concrete life, and White & Epston's concepts of alternative reality (Freedman & Combs, 1996). I also proposed that they change the work in a way that would move their stories forwards before departing from the beach and returning home. An hour later, as the sun was making its way above the mountains, the participants returned to the circle around the fire. Working towards the workshop's closure, I asked someone to volunteer and lead the group to the 'bridges area', where the creations were formed. Shay volunteered to lead and be the first one to show us his work. Arriving at his sculpture, I asked Shay to pick another participant as a main witness and then, share the story that the work unfolds. Shay named his (abstract) creation "between doing and being, knowing and not knowing". Epos, who was chosen as Shay's witness took the lead and invited us to his work. Upon arriving, we discovered a sculpture of a woman - perhaps man - perhaps boy - cradled inside a round hole shaped as a womb.

As Epos found it hard to specify the work's name, he settled for a sequence of thoughts which surfaced *"I do not know, it is very primal, an end which is also a beginning..."* Nil invited the group to his work, revealing the way he chose to re-create it at sunrise. *"During the night I tried very hard to build a bridge between the two spaces. Returning at sunrise opened the option of digging a tunnel as a way to connect the two spaces. The play in the sand opened this new option as it helped me to let go of previous plans"*.

As this form of sharing was internalized the group moved from one space to the other, seeing, hearing and remembering everyone's work. Reaching Miriam's space, the group was overwhelmed from what was revealed: the sculpture of a slim woman (perhaps a girl) which was made last night (having a flat bosom and narrow pelvis) had transformed into a mature, pregnant woman. Miriam, sharing her story said *"as I arrived in the morning I realized that the work had been transformed. In the beginning, I didn't understand it, but then I realized that the tide had brought in sand that re-sculptured my work. Now my work is to accept this change, from a slim girl to a pregnant woman..."* (T.2.7 & T.2.8.) As the group asked Miriam to say more about the work Miriam said that two motherhood stories now merge. One relates to her being a mother of an adopted boy and the other relates to her being her own mother, giving herself permission to take a year's sabbatical. The moment was very exciting for all group members, identifying with Miriam's story. Someone began to sing another Hebrew song Mother, which tells the story of the strong and inseparable connection that exists between a mother and her child. Everyone joined in this well known song, as people gathered around Miriam who cried quietly. The group continued with other well-known Israeli songs that Israelis refer to as 'after the war songs'; specifically one telling about the way in which mother earth accepts and envelops the dead sons who return home from the war. Other people joined the crying, voicing out additional (hidden) stories.

6.3.8 Fifth Circle – Taking Sand Home

The sun was working its way into the sky and the temperature was rising. After everyone had shared, I asked if we could all gather for our last circle under an improvised umbrella we had constructed. I wanted to help people bridge the way back

home; transferring the learning they had gained from the experiential work done during the workshop into knowledge that could be used in their everyday life. I invited them to share what they were taking from the workshop and turned it into a concrete assignment (doing) that they could do and practice at home.

Nil was the first one to talk:

"I am going to renew my contract with my partner. In fact I am going to offer her to do some kind of ceremony on a bridge near our home..." (T.2.2).

Shay said that he would take some 'non-doing time' and would therefore spend some quiet time in a small spring near his parents' place. Rachel asked the group for assistance as she said that she knows she wants to get rid of some demons connected to her self-judgment. Hearing this request, Zara suggested she make small sculptures of these demons and hang them on a tree in her garden "from my experience the solution with demons is not to get rid of them but, on the contrary, to get familiar and even friendly with them". Sara said that the workshop had allowed her to reconnect to God and to her mother who had passed away a few years ago: "I was really surprised to encounter these spiritual elements here. Perhaps I will take some solitary time in nature and use it to read a book I have just started. Its name is To Request God. (T.2.10)

I made sure everyone knew with whom he or she would conduct the follow-up, non-facilitated meeting and checked they all knew the time and place of the processing meeting. A formal ending was declare

While the group made its way back to the starting point, everyone joined Epos who took out plastic bags and collected the garbage which was scattered on the beach. Seeing this gave me a deep sense of happiness and completion, as I felt that my journey from ecology into therapy was making sense and that Nature Therapy can indeed foster nature conservation values and deeds.

6.4 Processing and Conceptualization Meeting 2 (18th August 2004)

The three-hour processing and conceptualization follow-up meeting took place in Epos' home two weeks later. I opened it with a suggestion to stick to the same

structure as the previous indoors meeting, keeping the first two hours as an open and fluid dialogue and then move to a one-hour lecture/discussion, to develop and explore the methodological framework of the workshop. My suggestion was accepted and the session started.

6.4.1 Cycle 1: Making Dreams come True

Tina was the first to talk, saying that she went through a very important process and that she wanted to share:

"During the workshop I felt a strong presence of my deceased grandfather. Even though I do not normally believe in spirits, I could really feel him next to me surrounding me with his belief and love. The encounter with the sand allowed me to return to primal aspects of myself, which helped me to connect with the child-like parts of me. These elements highlighted several important aspects of 'life' which I tend to forget: love, kindness and friendship. In addition a strange thing happened when my best friend surprised me and took me to meet a woman who performs channeling. During this meeting, the woman said that I need to give more place to fairies and angels as I neglect my inner-child. Following this, I took my partner for a short holiday by the lake during which I shared with him this process. This was the first time in a long time I really felt he was with me". (T.2.2; T.2.7 & 2.2.10).

After Tina's sharing, Zara said that she also went through a very meaningful process which she felt all group members are part of:

"During the 'non facilitated meeting' I had with Miriam it became clear that the training gave me energy to do something which I have dreamt about for years... I took my car, said goodbye to my husband and children and drove to the Galilee (in northern Israel) for three days to spend time with myself and with friends. The journey was accompanied with a lot of excitement and fear. Returning home, it became clear I could set aside my casual fears as I started to design a Nature Therapy workshop with Sara – offering women with fertility problems a chance to work in nature. In addition, a magical event happened when one of my clients raised the option of conducting our sessions outdoors – opening a door towards fulfilling a longing I have had for such a long time" (T.2.1).

Nil joined in and shared:

"The workshop opened up a new dimension in my relationship with my partner. The play and struggle with the sand provided a clear metaphor of our relationship and the homework gave us a great opportunity to work on our issues and reconnect the bridge between our worlds".

Hearing these stories I had to express my excitement and said that I was really happy to hear that the work was helping people connect with their intuitive and child-like parts, helping them turn their dreams into reality.

Aiming to learn more about what had supported this learning I asked if more people 'did their homework' and in what way it had impacted their experience.

Sara said: *"There is something very powerful in the tasks and commitments we took at the end of the workshop. It is as if the task made the dreams accessible, helping us to make them come true"*. Continuing her sharing Sara said: *"The workshop connected me to a basic belief I had as a child, in God and in nature. This reconnection made me confront some of my present ways of living and at the same time gave me a lot of strength to make the changes I felt needed"*. (T.2.1; T.2.7 & T.2.8).

Relating to these shared stories, I said that it seems that this way of working combining imaginative-meta-physical and spiritual work during the workshop in nature, followed up with concrete assignments to be performed at home, constructs a powerful framework that helps bridge between two worlds: the metaphoric and the concrete, the fantastic and the 'real'. I also said that these sharings highlight a way in which spirituality can be incorporated into therapy. As such, it offers a non-religious way to connect to God and to the 'larger than self', while assisting nature and creativity to form spontaneous rituals (Berger & McLeod, 2006).

These aspects, which are not common in mainstream psychotherapy (West, 2004), can open an important dimension of the field, helping people explore their ways of living, giving them additional meanings and putting them into a wider context.

6.4.2 Cycle 2: Between Theory and Intuition, Art and Science, Male and Female (T.2.9)

As this conversation continued, Sara said that she was not clear whether the process was becoming therapy, or if it was still training. Rachel said that she needed some more theory to support this conversation, as it seems that it is all subjective:

"coming from years of working in the clinical setting, I need more systematic grounding. If I use this language in our staff meetings at the clinic, I will not be given any patients and furthermore I may be addressed as one..."

Relating to Rachel Abram said:

"I think that this dialogue contains two different elements: one relates to the place of intuition and spirituality within therapy, the other is the need we – as therapists have for solid theory. Personally I think they are not in contrast, yet I join Rachel's feeling that we need more theory".

Continuing Sara said:

"At the beginning of the training I also asked for theory, thinking that its shortage prevents me from taking my clients out into nature. Now I feel different. I still need theory, but feel much more certain in my ability to deliver the work myself".

Relating to this conversation, I said that Nature Therapy does call for and develop intuitive work, and that indeed the approach is still young and needs further work on its theoretical foundation. At the same time, it seems that a lot of the knowledge we seek is present in this room embedded in the stories people tell. Aiming to encourage the group's analytical 'theory making' I briefly explained the basic ideas of the Grounded Theory method and suggested they adopt it into their listening, trusting the idea that the stories that are being told include not only people's experiences but also the basis of theories that can be developed from them (McLeod, 2002, 2003b).

Relating to the former debate Miriam said:

"Personally, I see psychotherapy more as a form of art than a kind of science. I do not think one can learn to become a good therapist from reading books in the same way that one who studies all about Picasso might become a good art critic, but not necessarily a good artist..."

As I felt that this debate related to important questions, I chose to highlight them and said that it seems that we were exploring issues such as different styles of learning and of doing therapy, such as the imaginative and the cognitive, as well as different ways of addressing the process. I said that it seems these questions relate the larger field of Psychotherapy and to the place of Nature Therapy within recognized (scientific) approaches.

I felt that some people in the group were dissatisfied with my way of resolving their claim for more theory and I reminded them that the last hour would be devoted to theory.

6.4.3 Cycle 3: Between Child and Adult, Strength and Vulnerability, Male and Female (T.2.2 & T.2.1)

The conversation continued and Abram said: *"During the workshop I got very excited and even though I did not want to cry I could not hold back my tears. I hate to be seen crying"*.

Epos responded: *"Seeing you cry made me envy you. As a grownup man, I would never allow myself to cry when there are other people around. I think it goes back to my childhood – if I cried my father would beat me up saying 'boys do not cry'"*.

This conversation triggered Zara who said: *"I was deeply touched by your crying. To see an adult man cry and talk in an authentic way about his vulnerability is truly inspiring"*.

Tina said: *"I don't know if this issue is only a gender issue. Even though I am a woman I also feel embarrassed to cry and be seen as vulnerable"*.

Continuing along this line Rachel said: *"I was also not allowed to cry. Even today, although I know crying is O.K I still find it very hard"*.

Shifting the direction of the conversation Miriam said: *"For me this talk opens a question about the place of tears within therapy. Many times I feel I am trying to help my clients understand the reasons for their misfortunes, when what they really long for is a safe place to cry and express their disappointments, shame and vulnerability"*.

Relating to the discourse, I said that it seems we are dealing with questions involving the option of integrating childhood and adulthood, strength and vulnerability, elements from our male and female genders. Aiming to learn more about the way in which the work in nature triggered these issues, I asked for their response.

Miriam answered: *"The encounter with the wind and water followed by the play in the sand made me feel very sensual and alive"*.

Tina continued and shared: *"On one hand I could really be a child, sitting near my grandfather and playing in the sand but at the same time I was an adult, a therapist observing this child - me. This dialogue between the child and adult was fascinating"*.

Rachel related to the impact of the entire space, touching upon another aspect: *"This was the first time in many years that I did not only sleep on the beach but also saw the sunset and sunrise, high and low tide. Being there within this cycle made me reflect upon my own cycle: the maturation of my kids and the fact that my oldest daughter is leaving home"*.

Epos asked to share his thoughts: *"After the workshop I went to the desert. It is a very safe place for me, as I have had many experiences while growing up. I think that in many ways it was the desert that shaped the adult I am today. Nevertheless, I found it very hard to return there. I longed to meet the landscape as I remembered it: The old fig tree above the secret water pond, the rocks I used to climb ... When I returned there now and I realized these elements had changed, I got angry and depressed. That is why I hardly go there anymore"*.

Miriam asked: *"Don't you want to see the changes?"*

Epos answered: *"Once I felt like the king of the desert, today no one recognizes me there. The desert has become the memorial sight of the days when I was an attractive young man..."*

Being aware of time and the need to include theory through conceptualization, I asked if we could conclude the sharing and use it as a basis for the continuation of the session.

6.4.4 Crossing the Bridge – from Practice to Theory

Opening this part of the gathering, I said that my main purpose in this lecture format session was to place the work in its theoretical context, while using participants' stories as a bridge between theory and practice, practice and theory (McLeod, 2002).

Playing in the Universal Sandbox

The basic concept of 'playing in the universal sandbox' shaped the construction of the entire training, doing the workshop on a full moon's night on the beach, and using sand play as the basis for a creative therapeutic process. In fact it seems this concept integrates two ideas:

1. Sand play.
2. The connection to the universe and cycles of nature.

I will begin by illustrating (1): Sand Play

This Nature Therapy framework was derived from Ryce-Menuhin's idea of working in the (Jungian) sand box, developed for an indoors, clinical setting. He claims that "*directed and spontaneous play in the sand allows the revelation of deep subconscious archetypes and symbols, while giving the inner-world, the metaphors, a concrete representation in the external 'real world' – the sand*" (Ryce-Menuhin, 2003: 36 translation from Hebrew). This 'not knowing', playful activity, which includes the concrete presentation of the figures (symbols), can be used to explore the stories being told. Working with this concept in groups, using narrative principles and the idea of the active witness, can widen the story's perspective, as each participant projects his/her own story upon the explored creation, while giving it a different meaning and context. The potential of this mode of work was demonstrated in the second circle of the first and second workshops, when participants were asked to sculpt an image in the sand and name it as well as naming the others. Using this framework in the beginning of a workshop provides a broad ground upon which clear figures can be drawn. Relating to the previous questions about underpinning theory, I said that as a therapist the use of this Gestalt concept of figure and ground gives me confidence and raises my trust in the 'here and now', and the ability to work through moments of 'not knowing'. 'Playing in the sand' means that I am also part of the game: knowing and not knowing, exposing and being exposed.

This playful mode of work also widens and deepens the connection to childlike (inner child) parts and to the imagination, an element that was demonstrated in Tina's story in the beginning of this session.

(2): The connection to the universe and cycle of nature:

This framework relates to work that took place on the beach, and not in a sandbox in an indoors clinic. It extends the classic context of the original technique opening it up to additional dimensions. One of these basic extensions relates to the resonance that takes place during the creative process not only between the person and sand, but also between the person and the 'larger than self' - nature. Observing the process from a broad systemic and spiritual (perhaps Ecopsychological) perspective, it seems that two processes take place simultaneously: The person sculpting his/her presentation and nature/God sculpting/observing his/hers. The first chooses a (limited) space on the beach, in which s/he will use the elements (sand, water...) to create an artistic product, whereas the other (nature/God) holds a much larger creation, of which the former (the person and his/her creation) is only a (small) part ... This dialectic discourse between the two creators, man and nature can open a unique dialogue between the client and the 'larger than self', touching upon spiritual and transpersonal dimensions.

In the previous session, Tina's story demonstrated a way this concept allowed her to encounter the spirit of her (deceased) grandfather and Sara's story demonstrated a way it helped her to re-connect to God and to deep questions regarding her identity and destiny.

Another powerful aspect of the concept of 'playing in the universal sandbox' relates to its ability to support work on issues relating to the basic concept of 'psychological time'. Shmotkin and Eyal (2003) refer in their article to psychological time in older age, and the tension that exists between personal, limited life time and everlasting cosmic time. Aiming to explain this tension they say that *"the life course (of each person) involves both growth and decline throughout (cosmic) time; (therefore) human beings are ambivalent in their attitude towards time"* (2003: 265). Working on personal life stories in nature, relates to cosmic time and allows a direct encounter between the two: personal stories of birth and death and the perpetual universal cycle demonstrated by the sunrise and sunset, high and low tide. This element was demonstrated in the story Epos shared about the conflicts included in his maturation and aging process and the ritual that was formed around Miriam's work in the sunrise circle towards the end of the second workshop. Shmotkin and Eyal (2003) claim that since personal conceptions regarding 'time' are key factors in maintaining and developing well-being, 'psychological time' is a vital factor which counselors and therapists should consider when working with people facing normal transitions and developmental challenges in life. Epos' and Miriam's stories illustrate a way in which the connection to cyclic natural phenomena, such as high and low tide, sunset and sunrise can be used to connect the personal cycle and the universal one, of which we are all part. This mode of work can help to broaden the client's perspective of time and gain acceptance of his/her past, while engaging a sense of continuity and flow. It does not seek to scientifically explain these (aging) processes, but rather to help the person relate to them as a natural and normal process, while utilizing a sense of harmony and unity with his/her surrounding (Davis, 1998).

This way of incorporating the cycle of nature into therapy can be very effective in the post-modern time. This cycle, as a meta-narrative, is likely to be acceptable by most people, including in mixed culture groups where participants may

have different standpoints and ways of perceiving the world (Berger & McLeod, 2006). As such, it can unite people around one element (the belief that the night follows the day, high tide follows low tide, the existence of the sea and mountains after our time). Furthermore, it can offer a powerful way to normalize dramatic life events and expand their meaning, while helping the individual foster the idea that his/her story is part of the larger, never ending creation (Macy & Fleming, 1998). In addition, it offers a spiritual framework that can be incorporated into therapy, offering a non-religious way to deal with issues which are 'larger than self'. The power that this concept and the way it can be used in Nature Therapy was demonstrated in the spontaneous activity (birth and mourning songs) that was formed around Miriam's work in the 'sunrise circle' of the second workshop.

6.5 Workshop 3 (2nd – 3rd September 2004)

6.5.1 Aims in Planning the Workshop

This workshop aimed to help the closure and separation process from the training. I planned it according to the ritualistic idea of rites of passage. The aim was to help the participants make the transition from studying Nature Therapy to actually using it in practice. It was designed to strengthen their confidence in using this framework and to give them a chance to do 'hand's-on work'. I planned to take a backstage position, and ask them to work with each other in pairs (one as 'therapist', the other as 'client'). This choice followed a telephone call I had received from a few of the participants, expressing a wish to continue their meetings after the training's official ending, in order to work as a non-facilitated group.

6.5.2 The Therapist can Also Ask for Nature's Help

Arriving at the beach, I felt troubled and confused. My thoughts were on some personal issues and I felt I was not really available for the group. I was happy I had two hours before people's arrival and I took this time for a mind-body-spirit preparation. The beach was almost empty and the weather was nice. I sat on the soft sand and watched the horizon. Several seagulls were standing on the rocks near an old fisherman. The sky was clear and the sea quiet. Yet I felt how the inner storm I had come with was still bubbling. I dug a shallow pit and lay in it, covering myself with

sand. Listening to the mantra of the waves, I imagined that each wave was taking one of my thoughts and cleansing it from running inside my head. Waking up after an hour, I felt much better and realized that even though I had talked about this issue in supervision, I was still having my own difficulties separating from this beloved group and from the sea which had so generously hosted us. After all, it was the first 'real' Nature Therapy training I had ever facilitated working with the same participants throughout a year's journey. Receiving telephone calls from participants telling me they would be late, I wondered if they were also delaying the encounter with this separation process. I was happy to have more private time on the beach and wondered about the complexity of the matrix that this separation contains: departing not only from the facilitator and group members but also from this beautiful place.

6.5.3 Circle 1 – Arriving (Between Solid Ground and Deep Water)

The workshop began in the same manner as the previous ones, allowing people to arrive gradually. Participants wandered off in different directions, getting re-acquainted with the beach. I drew a circle, hoping it would give them a clear mark where to assemble. After everyone had gathered, I asked them to sit silently on the sand, allow their knees to touch each other's knee, place their foreheads on the sand and listen to the sound of the waves and to their own breath. Then, I used a simple guided imagination exercise to summarize the previous encounters (repeating what we had done in each meeting and asking them to trace back main memories) and introduced the concept of the present workshop. Following this, I asked them to reflect upon the ways they had arrived at the workshop, including their aims, wishes, fears and expectations from it.

Rachel was the first one to talk: *"I came with mixed feelings as I feel partly in and partly out. I found that this framework, moving between the spontaneous and cognitive triggers complex issues in me, issues which I did not really mean to touch. At the same time, there is some kind of magic within the group and within this way of working which attracts me and convinced me to come"*.

Tina related to the bodily experience we had just done and said: *"This short exercise was strong for me as I could really feel the connection to the universe. This is a new sensation which I discovered during this training. Now that we are about to depart, I wonder if it will be possible for me to maintain this ability alone"*.

Sara talked about the sorrow she felt towards the conclusion of the workshops and raised her hope that the group would find ways to continue and meet after the departure from the facilitator. Zara said that she identifies with Sara's and Tina's feelings but that she is really in the 'here and now', and just wondering what would be revealed today.

I said that it was interesting to hear how people relate to different aspects of the approaching separation: some emphasized the atmosphere, some the connection with nature and cosmos and others related to the separation from the group itself. I said that this sharing made me reflect about the different dimensions that Nature Therapy has, as it contains both human and natural (non-human) factors. As such, I said that I was also curious about what the current workshop would include and reveal.

After I had repeated my intention to take a step back and allow the participants to take more responsibility over the process, Sara suggested leading the group to a new location which the group has not yet visited. As the participants happily agreed, we all started walking to a lagoon south of our usual working space. This experience, walking on solid ground only few steps from the deep blue water was very exciting and triggered various responses: Nil, Epos and Tina went to the very edge of the reef and stood at the place where the waves meet the rocks. The rest of the group stood together in a higher place, keeping themselves dry watching their three 'daring friends' who by that time were quite wet.

Worried about the safety of the three, I joined them on the rocks. As I arrived Nil said that he wanted to jump into an enclosed hole and asked me for my approval. I was embarrassed. On one hand I was worried about his safety, wondering about the limits of my insurance policy... at the same time I knew Nil's high physical skills and trusted his judgment. I was acquainted with this lagoon and knew we could grab Nil in case of need. Asking Epos and Tina to stand with me near the borders of the hole I permitted Nil to jump in. A second later Nil was inside the hole enjoying the undercurrents and being careful of the rocks. Watching the participants (including the group that stood behind) it seemed we all swam with Nil. Some of the participants were shouting, laughing and at the same time taking care of Nil's safety. Helping Nil

emerge from the hole, I felt like I was part of a teenager's maturation ritual, encountering fear, strength and brotherhood while challenging risks.

By now the sun was making its way down and everyone joined together and silently watched the beautiful picture of the sun entering the sea. The harmonious moment was interrupted by a massive mosquito 'attack', which caused the group to leave the location and return to the known (and mosquitoes-free) beach.

6.5.4 Second Circle – Entering the Water

Returning from the reef with the last sun beams, I drew a new circle signaling people where to gather. I opened and said that for me the event that had taken place around Nil's jump into the water was symbolic of the place where participants stand as we enter the last experiential encounter on the beach: *"Do I take the challenge and jump into the deep water of doing Nature Therapy, or do I keep a distance from it, where I can observe others who jump in and are incorporating Nature Therapy in their practice?"*

I asked people to voice out their wishes and ideas and decide together on the way that the work will be continued. Most people said that they were not interested in working on 'separation issues'. I suggested using this time to experience and explore the option of facilitating a Nature Therapy session. I presented the idea of working in couples: one as therapist and the other as a client. Zara said *"I like this idea, yet I still need your support and presence (talking to me)"*. Relating to this Abram said: *"I agree with Zara and would like to offer a framework in which we begin in the circle under your guidance and then separate into couples to continue the work"*. Rachel related to this idea and said *"The idea of facilitating a session frightens me but Abram's idea relaxes me and makes my participation in this experience possible"*.

Hearing these requests, I said that it seemed that Abram's idea was supportive and offered to start the experience by taking time to inquire what people would like to gain from this experiment, and the personal and professional issues they would like to explore.

6.5.5 Third Circle – In the Light of the Moon

As the moon was making its way above the mountains, shedding more and more light on the beach, I made a fire and declared a short tea break. Then, in order to create more intimacy and start the inquiry process, I asked participants to tighten the circle and reflect on the role they would like to take (therapist or client), including specific issues they would like to explore. Tina said: *"I would like to be a client and use this time to explore a kind of sadness that I have contained for a long time. It feels like a hole in my heart"*. Looking at Zara, Tina asked *"Would you like to be my therapist and help me unfold this issue?"* Zara said she would be happy to work with Tina. Abram took the stage and said *"I would like to work on my lack of confidence as a therapist and challenge it by taking the role of a therapist"*. As I asked him to say more about his feelings, he said *"Because I was trained as a conventional clinical psychologist I am used to relying on theory and cognition, so I find it hard to incorporate the spontaneous manner that was offered here into my work. When I do it, I really enjoy the session but at the same time I feel guilty for this enjoyment and sense of play. I think this is what I would like to challenge"*. Shay said *"During the training and follow-up, non-facilitated talks I realized that I wanted to ask my girlfriend to marry me. I will be happy to explore this idea and look closely into some of my fears regarding the issue with the help of a 'therapist'"*.

Tina and Epos said that they want to work together without defining anything for the group. Nil said: *"I want to explore the individual and separate space within my relationship. I am not clear if I want to use this time to be alone with nature or have a 'therapist' accompanying me there"*. Joining his sharing, Sara said *"I identify with that. Perhaps we can find a way to work together that respects each one's personal space and nevertheless keeps some kind of connection through it"*. Rachel said: *"I still feel half in and half out. I am not clear if I want to take any roles"*.

Aiming at helping participants assimilate and practice the framework that was presented in the training, I suggested continuing the work in couples, transferring these verbal stories into active and creative explorations within nature. Relating to Abram's request for my involvement, I asked if they would like me to share few ideas about ways in which each couple's work can begin and to see if they would like to

incorporate it into their original thoughts. As the group happily consented, I addressed each of the couples and offered my idea:

I suggested that Tina and Zara begin by going for a walk on the beach while imagining every step in the sand is a step in time. Then to trace footprints which related to the 'hole in Tina's heart'. Then (picking up on the physical metaphor of the hole) to dig a pit in the sand and explore her relationship with it. Zara said that she liked this idea and that from there she feels free to carry on alone.

Turning to Shay, I asked if he would like to explore the issues he had mentioned with Abram as therapist. Receiving Shay's approval, I asked Abram to turn to his inner guidance and see what image came when he thinks of this work with Shay. Abram said that he sees a wolf. Using this metaphor, I shared my knowledge of Native American mythology and told Abram that the wolf symbolizes 'the path finder and wise teacher'. Then I asked him to observe his wolf and trust his guidance while working with Shay. In addition, being aware of the fact that Shay was older and had an assertive character, I asked Abram to take a leading and active position in his role as therapist. I felt there was some kind of tension around the issue of hierarchy between the two, so I suggested that they begin by talking about their contract and then construct together the physical barrier around them, defining a concrete place of work.

Relating to Sara's sharing, I turned to Nil and Sara and asked them if they would like to explore the option of working together and yet separately. As they agreed, I suggested that they choose a specific location on the beach and talk about their personal preference, compromises and communication styles within their relationships. Then, after reaching an agreement they should decide upon the distance they needed from each other and define and build individual spaces relating to each other in some way. I suggested they should not rush the process and, in case 'nothing comes to mind' give room to the 'nothing' time, and observe what enters 'the empty space'.

Concluding the circle, I turned to Rachel and asked her to say something about her present feelings. Rachel said: *"I feel sad and disconnected. I find difficulties with the vague guidance and think I want 'alone time'".* Feeling uncomfortable with Rachel's statement, I asked her if she would like to join another couple or work with me. As Rachel said that she rather stay alone, I suggested that she might use this time and explore the issue of being 'inside and outside' by walking between people's spaces and on the edge of the group territory. Even though I was not at peace with this situation and choice, wondering if I was 'pushing her outside', I decided to allow Rachel this space.

Before opening the circle for the couple experience I reminded the 'therapists' 'to stay simple' and work with the most obvious symbols which emerged. I also asked them to try and avoid psychological (verbal) interpretations in the physical and artistic mode of working, using contact with nature as the main reference.

Ending this long (and tiring) session a dinner break was declared.

6.5.6 Fourth Circle - Making the Transition

It was near midnight. The sea was very calm and the moon was reflected in it. After dinner and after tea had been drunk, I asked everyone to stand up and gather in a circle around the fire. Then I asked them to close their eyes and listen to the waves. Then to open their eyes and make contact with the person they chose to work with and depart from the circle to their couples' work. I also said that I would come to call them back to the circle in two hours time. As the group scattered, I remained there maintaining the fire and holding the group space. Two hours later, after most couples asked for more time I allowed them to return gradually, yet asking couples who were still in the middle of the process to find a way to conclude. After everyone returned, a short talk took place sharing experiences from the exercise.

Tina was the first one to talk: *"It was amazing. As I was digging the hole, I realized I was digging into my past. Sensations were very strong as a secret regarding my relationship with my father was revealed. I was so happy Zara was there, joining me in such a gentle yet present manner. Feeling that she was not afraid to hear my*

story gave me strength to carry on digging and voice out the pain, as I was talking and digging at the same time. Her offer to place myself in different positions around the hole gave me new perspectives and allowed me to feel that the hole and I were separated. Then, following her suggestion to cover the hole filled me with joy, as I felt the wound I had carried for a long time was healing. It was as if the emptiness in my heart was filled by something else. I can not yet tell you what this 'new thing' is, but I can tell you it feels great".

Zara shared her experience as 'therapist' and said: *"I enjoyed this experience very much. I was surprised by its intensiveness and by the way that the physical work with the sand triggered the unfolding of such an unexpected and basic issue. This was the first time I really understood the potential of the concept of 'touching nature'. This short experience also gave me ideas about ways in which the ritualistic Nature Therapy mode of working can be performed with individuals. I also want to thank Tina for this opportunity, as I was deeply touched and inspired by the strength she had to come out of the hole, cover it, and walk out of it".*

The hour was approaching 2 a.m. and people said they were tired and needed to go to sleep. I said that since I would like to hear how people feel before concluding the experience, I would like the group to make a special effort and continue and at the same time to shorten the sharing.

Nil said: *"The idea of 'doing nothing' was very helpful, as it gave me a unique opportunity to reflect upon my life. After an hour of 'doing nothing' I realized I was falling into a strange kind of sleep, some form of day dreaming. When I woke up I remembered many dreams and had many insights. I think that this 'not doing time' is one of the things I miss today".* Relating to Nil's saying Sara said: *"I experienced something similar. The 'being time' allowed me to re-connect to the feeling of wholeness I missed for a long time. It gave me ideas how to bring it into my marriage. Another aspect related to the experience of taking 'time alone' on the beach at night, which as a woman I would generally be afraid of" (T.2.6.).*

Rachel joined the conversation and said: *"I had a hard time with the exercise since it emphasized the difficulty I feel with the issues of creativity and spirituality. Coming from a conventional clinical training and working place, I find it hard to connect to this spiritual mode of working. On one hand I am touched and inspired by*

this work and on the other, it seems so remote and detached from my everyday working environment".

After this Abram shared: *"The experience helped me to enter a more leading and 'knowing' state, as I found a way to extend the use of story-telling techniques by listening sensitively to the waves and through sensory work in the sand. I do not know if what I did was Nature Therapy but it felt right and precise".*

Concluding the circle, Tina said that she and Epos had not gone along with the facilitator's suggestion but simply sat on the sand and talked: "It was great to have time to talk with a man about issues which I normally can talk only with women: the issue of sexuality". Epos said that he also enjoyed this opportunity and that he is tired and wanted to eat and sleep.

The hour was nearly 4am, the session was closed and a very short sleeping time was declared.

6.5.7 Fifth Circle - Sunrise

The night was turning into a day and people were gradually waking up. Dragonflies were swarming around us and a soft wind was blowing. I took the teapot off the fire and invited people to drink. I suggested they should take the time and revisit their night's work. This time, as it was the last encounter on the beach, I suggested that participants reflect upon their entire journey and think of one commitment they would like to make between themselves and 'nature or God'.

After this offer people made different decisions: a few went for a short swim in the sea, several sat and wrote in their diaries and others stayed near the fire.

Flying with dragonflies

I was worried, seeing the physical distance Rachel took from the group by walking to a distant part of the beach. I decided to walk and join her. As I got closer, I realized that she was sitting beside a huge letter which she had written on the sand. Asking her permission to read it, it seemed to me like a prayer she had written for her children, partner and nature; acknowledging the wonders which are present in the simple moments of life.

Then I set next to her and watched the sea. Rachel looked at the horizon and said: *"I feel frustrated. I came to the training looking for ways that would help me to extend my classical ways of working; help me use my garden in therapy. Now the training is about to conclude and I feel I have more questions than answers and that I did not get the theory I was hoping to receive"*.

Turning to nature, I asked her whether she saw the dragonflies which had surrounded her when I arrived and which were still flying around us now. Rachel said she had and that in fact they had accompanied her as she was making her way from the group to the present space. Hearing this, I asked her if she would like to hear my interpretation of the event, as it was based on the integration of my previous impression of her work throughout the training and to Native American mythology (Sams & Carson, 1999). As Rachel expressed her willingness to listen, I said:

"The dragonfly symbolizes the power of illusion, magic and dream. I feel that as you are struggling to find this place within yourself, you are asking to find all the answers within theory and cognition. The dragonflies come to remind you of this power. They are asking you to give your intuition and imagination more space and let them take a bigger part in your guidance".

Rachel replied: *"I understand this symbolism but still find it hard to hold these spiritual and mystical sayings. In fact, this is the thing with which I have been struggling throughout the entire training"*.

As the sun made its way above the mountains, I said it was time to return to the circle. Then, a magical thing happened: the dragonflies which surrounded us during the session followed us on the way back to the group. Arriving at the group, I related this strange event and I asked Rachel what meaning she makes of this incident of the dragonfly escort. Rachel said "I think it is an interesting coincidence and that perhaps they were following you" (talking to me). Turning this event into a Gestalt experiment (Kepner, 1987) I asked her to continue to walk, while I remained standing. Then the unexpected, or, perhaps rather the expected event happened - the dragonflies kept flying around her leaving me and the group behind. When both of us returned to the group the dragonflies flew away and disappeared. Both of us were overwhelmed by this mysterious event and we shared the story with the rest of the group. Epos offered a biological explanation of the dragonfly phenomenon, Rachel said that it did not matter what anyone says now – for her it will always stay a mystery.

6.5.8 Sixth Circle – Departure

As the sun was rising above the mountains, the last circle was created. Standing on the intermediate zone, where the water meets the sand, a strange combination of songs, jokes, prayers, wishes and sharing took place. A morning patrol by the nature reserve jeep highlighted the dramatic polarity between the intimate, perhaps sacred space present within the group, and the common and casual atmosphere of the open beach on a Friday morning.

As the intensity of this half-structured, half-spontaneous ritual faded, I made sure everyone knew with whom they would conduct the follow-up, non-facilitated meeting and that they all knew the time and place of the last processing meeting. Then a formal ending was declared. As the group made its way to the starting point, everyone joined Epos, as he took out plastic bags and collected the garbage which was scattered on the beach.

6.6 Processing Meeting Workshop 3 (9th September 2004)

The last follow-up meeting took place in Miriam's home two weeks after the workshop. Minutes after we were all seated, Shay opened with a dramatic wedding announcement, sharing his story with the group:

"After the work I did on the beach with Abram, I invited my partner to join me for the implementation of the 'homework' I received at the second workshop – taking a 'non-doing' time at the spring. While we were spending time in that special place, near the home in which I grew up, she proposed and I happily accepted. I feel that all of you took part in this journey and I really want to thank you for that".

After the excitement died down, I reminded people that it was the last processing meeting and suggested keeping the first section of the meeting to reflect upon the process of the last workshop and of the training as a whole; leaving time for a closing ritual at the end of the encounter. The group agreed and Abram opened and said:

"The experience with Shay was very empowering as it connected me with my intuition. The fact that I was there with all of you - doing strange things at the same time encouraged me and gave me legitimization to bring this creative and intuitive mode of working into my conduct. Yet I must admit that I am still afraid that a critical voice will appear and sabotage this ability. I feel a conflict between the need to follow my intuition and the need to work under a recognized and well accepted theory. I am afraid I will not be accepted in the clinical situation I work in. I feel the training was focused on our personal process and as such it connected me with my intuition, gave me confidence and a sense of worthiness, while at the same time I feel it missed much of Nature Therapy's theoretical aspects. I would appreciate it if we could use the time we have today to clarify some of these theoretical issues".

Rachel related to his words and said:

"I really connect to what Abram said. The fact I could not always understand and explain what was happening in the workshop was difficult for me. The mystical orientation that some of the training received made me feel I have nothing concrete to hold onto. I was looking for more practical intervention tools but instead I am left with a strong personal experience but no tools to take home to my practice".

Relating to this Zara said: *"I believe that a learning process is much more than simply receiving tools, in fact, I feel that the real learning begins now, as each of us needs to explore how s/he integrates the things s/he took from this training into his/her previous theories and his/her personal working style. Personally, after learning many theories I feel that the intuition is the tool I work with the most. That is not to say that theory is not important or that I do not use it, but still when I work I 'feel more than think".*

Talking to Abram she continued *"When you returned to the circle at the end of your work with Shay you really looked centred and clear. It seemed like some kind of deeper knowing entered your body – do not lose it! I understand the need for theory but sometimes it overrides and contradicts the inner knowledge, which sometimes is more valuable".*

Relating to this dialogue I said that it is interesting that this discourse about the balance between intuition and cognition, science and art (perhaps religion), child and adult, male and female continues throughout the training and receives such a dominant place now.

Personally I feel like a father whose children hold on to him, asking him to stay 'just a bit longer' before he kisses them goodbye and goes to work or takes them to the kindergarten. In other words, it seems to me that these sayings symbolized separation pains from me, from the group and the training's framework. Continuing along this line, I said that as I can really identify with these feelings, I invite them to keep in contact, come for a workshop or drop by for a visit. I also said that I would be happy if they take the colleague-group idea further, as it can support their development and contribute to the field's development.

Relating to Abram's and Rachel's saying, I said that indeed the learning process was built around the participants' experience, using it for the conceptualization of theory. Personally, I find this way of studying therapy much more effective, but, I understand that different people have different learning styles. I also said that I would like to remind them that Nature Therapy is still a young profession and as such does not yet have sufficient theory that can be taught. I guess that the coming trainings (to come after this one) will teach theory constructed upon the experience now gained and on the research which accompanies this journey.

In an attempt to use the remaining time for conceptualization, I said that I think that many Nature Therapy concepts were presented, demonstrated and practiced. Furthermore, witnessing the work that was done in the last workshop I got the impression that they had also been assimilated: basic concepts such as sacred space and the three-way relationship; playful and creative work in the sand; the physical orientation that the work received; the connection to intuition and spontaneity; the movement from one space to another; work in the 'here and now' and the creation and use of rituals. I also think that through the experience, the participants understood the potential of non-facilitated meetings and the support that concrete assignments (given

at the end of each workshop) offered the participants in their journey from Nature Therapy space into everyday space.

After this long speech, Nil said: *"Now that you point out these concepts it makes much more sense. It seems that we have developed some kind of language without being fully aware of it. I guess it is called Nature Therapy".*

Responding, I said I was glad to hear this, as I feel that this new language is still looking for its spelling and punctuations marks. I added that I hope that like nature, it will never be fixed and will remain dynamic and changeable as the waves and sand on the beach.

Returning to the issue we discussed before, Shay said: *"For me Nature Therapy is like a bridge between the spiritual and the scientific, the child and the adult, humans and nature. We have become so distanced from such simple things: I cannot remember the last time before this training took place when I took time to sense the wind or spend time with friends around a fire. In this respect, I think Nature Therapy represents not just a form of therapy but it also touches upon basic elements which are essential for human sanity and well-being."*

I shared: *"I feel that as an individualistic and secular society we no longer have a collective identity, knowledge or guidance to lean upon. Therefore, it is no longer clear how to explain and make sense of basic life events such as death and birth, pain and happiness. In the post-modern age, which holds so many possibilities for 'truth', how can one know what is really important. For me, the fact that I know that the sky is up and the ground is down, that one season follows the other, that the mountains are older and stronger than me and that in the end we all die provides me with the basic order and certainty in life and the world. This is a way the re-connection with nature goes together with issues such as mysticism, religion and spirituality and this way it is hard to avoid mystical experiences when one works in such unique settings like the one in our workshop. In fact, if I relate to days when we used to live in a closer connection with nature, these experiences were part of everyday life and were not regarded as some extraordinary or strange event. I know it*

is hard to conceptualize today, but it seems to me that we are actually touching something very simple and obvious that in fact was always there."

Hearing this, Rachel said: *"I can relate to this. I feel that the work we did can really sharpen a person's sensuous nature and help connect to inner guidance. As such, it can strongly help to get in touch with a sense of self evidence. This aspect is important, as it gives a person a sense of existence without the need for external evidence or feedback (from other people). I think it touches upon another important aspect of this work: it honors the basic need to take more 'being time' alone. Saying this now, I realize this is something I miss in my work as a psychotherapist. There is a constant need for active interaction as if without it nothing happens. During the last workshop, I took quite a long time to be alone. It was not easy, as it highlighted a few complex issues, nevertheless it was really empowering, as it allowed me to connect to the love I feel for my children and husband."*

As the time of the meeting was reaching its last hour, I asked people to become more aware of it and take more responsibility. Shay took the lead and said:

"I want to use the time we have left to talk about the option of forming a colleague's group. I feel I am receiving so much support from you all that I would not like to separate from you. It is as if we formed some kind of language that can be used only among ourselves. What do you think?" Hearing this Zara said: *"I would also really like to continue. I feel that during this training, I have made some special connections that I do not want to let go. I would like to form a space in which we can bring ourselves as people and as professionals. Shay and I started to work on a Nature Therapy group for women with fertile difficulties – I would love to use this space to share questions and ideas."*

Following this, conversation progressed on to more technical issues discussing the framework of this colleague's group, its contract and aims. Fifteen minutes later, I said that I was deeply touched by the seriousness with which people accepted the offer and would like to hear about its future development, but now I would like to take time to conduct a closing ritual. Hearing this, Tina and Telma said that they still have some things that they would like to share with the group before it departs. After I received

the group's approval to extend the duration of the meeting, Tina read to the group a poem she had written expressing her gratitude for the healing and maturation process it allowed her to go through. Then Tina read a story she had written acknowledging the unique contribution that each person had on her re-connecting with the inner-child and with her grandfather's spirit, elements which she felt are accompanying her ever since. By now it was already ten minutes past the allocated time of departure. I invited people to stand up, form a circle, take a deep breath and reflect upon this three-month-long journey and to voice out one thing to which they wish to make a commitment. After few silent minutes people began sharing:

Abram: *"To take space and to grow".*

Rachel: *"To feel".*

Tina: *"To take the love and happiness I feel here to my home".*

Nil: *"To have a stronger sense of compassion".*

Shay: *"To hold the first colleague's meeting".*

Tina: *"To continue with all of you on this journey with an open heart".*

Miriam: *"Not to be afraid to touch and be touched".*

Epos: *"To give my love for nature to others".*

Sara: *"To walk with you in this journey".*

Zara: *"To maintain and protect this circle".*

When the sharing was concluded Shay offered to lead a separation ritual: *"let's all put our hands in the centre of the circle and then take them out one at a time"*. As the ritual concluded, each person found his/her way to depart. Some left right away while others remained for a long time.

Three months after the interview Shay honoured his commitment and held the first colleague's meeting.

6.7 Learning that Emerged from the Chapter – Discussion and Connection to the Action Research Cycle

Using a dense, multi-dimensional description of the training, this chapter illustrated a unique model in which advanced Nature Therapy trainings can take place. It presented a way that nature's healing ability and its independent dynamic can be integrated with mind-body-spirit modes of work, while supporting participants' personal and professional development, in general, and the spiritual dimension, in particular. In addition, it seems that the Grounded Theory analysis it incorporated generated important learning that can contribute to the further development of the NT framework and practice, and as such for further Action Research cycles.

Category 1: Themes

This category refers to themes that people were dealing with or themes that the training allowed participants to work on. This category unfolded and highlighted the therapeutic impact that Nature Therapy can have upon healthy adults. It presented the broad and diverse issues that could be dealt with in similar conditions of settings, methods and overall orientation. Although this issue was not examined in the study nor was it one of its aims, the presence of these particular issues also relates to different NT elements which were present:

T.2.1 'Maturation and individuation process' – could have been impacted by the actual location of the workshop, being separated and distanced from the home environment (family, work and so-on). This separation may have triggered and supported work on issues such as separation and individuation.

T.2.2 'Duality between feminine and masculine, young and old, strong and weak' – could have been impacted by nature's 'ability' to contain duality, i.e. the dual presence of the sun and moon in the time of sunset; the construction and destruction of shapes in the sand by the wind; the presence, observation and awareness of these phenomena, as well as nature's containment ability (Naor, 1998). All these may have triggered and supported work that relates to the ability to contain and make meaning of the duality that exists within the participants.

T.2.3 'Feeling lonely and the need in partnership' – could have been impacted by the 'bonding impact' of being in an isolated and/or unfamiliar natural environment (Russell, 2004). This aspect together with the group work that was conducted and the

intimacy that was achieved may have triggered and supported work that relates to relationships and loneliness issues.

T.2.4 'Questions about human - nature relationships' – could have been impacted and triggered by presence in a natural setting and a facilitation style that invites and allows an Ecopsychological discourse and dimensions.

T.2.5 'Need for Control' - could have been impacted by the lack of external borders, the independent dynamic of nature and/or the flexible and creative facilitation style. These aspects may have triggered and supported work that relates to issues of control.

T.2.6 'Need for personal space in the family and relationships' – could have been impacted by similar elements as T.2.1 as well as to the openness of the workshop's location, as well as to the movement between group, couples and individual work that was given throughout the workshop. These aspects may have triggered and supported work that relates to the need for personal space in the family and/or in other relationships.

Most of these issues (T.2.1-T.2.6) relate to universal and collective issues that are common and shared by many people. However, their appearance here may have been impacted by the above elements and was more than just a coincidence. It seems this assumption, that specific elements within NT can trigger and support work on specific therapeutic issues, is worthwhile exploring in further Action Research cycles. Such a study, which can also have a qualitative component, can have important implications for practice.

Category 2: Spiritual issues

This category unfolded and highlighted the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions that were present and developed in the work (and Chapter). They were not exposed in this light before analysis; neither was the contribution they had for the personal and professional development of participants: engaging with magic and mystical experiences, while connecting to the inner child and to intuition (T.2.7) as well as expanding their connection to an inner core, while developing awareness and a higher identity (T.2.8). Similar to the assumption made in the previous paragraph, this connection to the 'spiritual' seems to have been influenced and triggered by different elements whose presence was emphasized and worked with during the workshop, such

as the eternal aspects of nature and cosmic time, as they dialogue with our temporal life time and being, and/or the cycles of nature and the mystical dimensions it contains (Chapter 2.2 & 2.3). This aspect, which first unfolded here, can be further explored in additional Action Research cycles or in a separate research. This issue may have important implications on practice and could probably be developed much further.

Category 3: Issues regarding the training

This category unfolded and highlighted issues and complexities that relate to the training, such as questions about the relationship between theory and experience (T.2.9.) and questions that relate to boundaries – physical touch, hierarchy and intimacy between therapist and client/teacher and student (T.2.11). It also unfolded difficulties that relate to the transition from the workshop to everyday life (T.2.10.) and issues that emerged about the structure of trainings and perhaps also the therapeutic applications of this intense format. Since this issue first only unfolded here and can have important applications on practice, another Action Research cycle and/or an independent research on the issue may be worthwhile.

It seems that the analysis process and the meaning gained through the analysis and coding process have an important contribution to the framework development, in addition to what can be learned in future Action Research cycles and other independent research. Once again, they highlight to potential of Action Research and the connection between practice and theory generation, in particular.

It would appear that this Chapter's style of writing offers a fresh way to present an Action Research study that included Grounded Theory analysis and a reflexive standpoint. This dense and multi-dimensional presentation can allow readers to look inside the complex process of knowledge generation, as it takes place between the facilitator and participants during the encounter, as well as how it occurs for the researcher (spoken previously in the facilitator's voice) during the analytic process that took place after the training concluded. In addition, it seems that this style of presenting not only explains the concepts and methods that were generated during the process but also to shows their implementation in practice. In addition, the reflexive commentary, and the sharing of the facilitator's subtext, highlights questions and

complexities that can assist practitioners who are interested in integrating this work into their practice. This research style of writing may be more user-friendly and available for practitioners who sometimes do 'not bother' reading academic and research studies, due to their distant attitude and low-relevance for practice.

Further discussion of the themes and issues arising from the work reported in this Chapter can be found in Chapter 7, which follows.

VOLUME 2

CHAPTER 7 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This Chapter discusses the research findings. The first section of the Chapter gives an account of the ways in which different aspects of the Nature Therapy framework were generated from the Action Research cycle. The second section summarizes the research outcomes, highlighting the main concepts and methods it produced. The third main section demonstrates ways in which this Ph.D. has added to the existing body of knowledge and to the fields that stand at its basis. The fourth section highlights ways in which the research can be applied to the development of future practice, research and theory, while the final section discusses the research's credibility and other methodological issues.

7.1 Using Action Research to Generate a Theory

This sub-Chapter presents the way in which the framework that the Ph.D. generated has been developed from Action Research cycles. It highlights this process in a way that shows what led to the articulation and development of each concept or method, aiming to help the reader make sense and articulate this complex, non-linear process.

7.1.1 Action Research Cycle 1: The Development of a Preliminary Model of Nature Therapy

In 2001, following my first experience doing therapy in nature (Joseph's story; Berger & McLeod, 2006) this cycle began. It focused on my reflections of 'what is therapy', my relationship with nature and ideas about ways to integrate nature into a therapeutic approach. These ideas were articulated in the final dissertation of my Drama Therapy training which was titled 'Nature Therapy'. The aim of this cycle was to explore ways in which the ideas could be applied in practice.

At the beginning of the cycle, the key questions that I was seeking to answer were:

1. What are the distinctive concepts that are necessary to make sense of the process of effective therapeutic work within natural settings?
2. What are the methods and interventions through which Nature Therapy theory can be applied?

Action Research data were collected in relation to the research questions from a variety of sources. I designed a therapeutic programme titled 'Encounters with Nature' (September 2001- June 2002), which was implemented, on a pilot basis, by two schools for children with special needs and run by me on a half voluntary basis. Notes on my experience of conducting the programmes and on the impact they had upon the children were collected into my therapist log book. The notes included impressions of the school psychologists and the teachers who accompanied the programs. Analysis of the data took place during supervision and staff meetings throughout the programme. A report was written at the end of the programme and sent to the facilitators for feedback. The final report was written and used in the application for the Ford Foundation International Award (environmental education). The award was received few months later and funded the continuation of the project during its second year. The questions that I asked myself upon concluding this cycle were the trigger for starting this Ph.D.

The key findings/learning that emerged from this cycle included several ideas, concepts and methods that were highlighted as potentially effective:

1. The idea of 'nature as a therapeutic setting'.
2. The concept of the 'three-way relationship': client-therapist-nature.
3. The 'Building a Home in Nature' intervention method.
4. The option of adopting methods and concepts from drama and art therapy into outdoor work.

The above topics were presented in their innovative form in an article 'In the Footsteps of Nature' published in a semi-academic professional journal (Appendix 3.1)

As these concepts and methods had just emerged and were still vague, and since I felt that there was much more to be unfolded, a second Action Research cycle was designed.

Issues and areas that I wanted to further inquire at the close of this cycle included:

1. To further explore and develop the former findings.
2. To develop and articulate more theory, concepts and methods.
3. To explore the model's impact on different clients and in different settings.
4. To check if the concepts and methods that had been generated so far could be implemented by other practitioners or were they simply and only 'Ronen's way of doing therapy'.

7.1.2 Action Research Cycle 2: Testing a New Nature Therapy Framework with Different Clients and in Different Settings, Delivered by Different Facilitators

The aims of the second Action Research Cycle were:

1. To test the validity and applicability of the elementary Nature Therapy model, by looking at whether the ideas and methods that I had developed could be effectively used by other facilitators.
2. To further develop this framework by exploring the ideas that this experience generated by the facilitators.

The key questions at the beginning of Cycle 2 were:

1. What are the concepts and methods used by Nature Therapy practitioners and in what ways can they be articulated into the creation of a framework?
2. In what ways can Nature Therapy programs impact children with special needs?
3. What is the impact that such a program has upon the staff that facilitated it?

During this cycle, a year-long Nature Therapy programme was designed and delivered. It included an intensive five days training for teachers and therapists. After this, the program was carried out in four schools for children with special needs, under

regular Nature Therapy-oriented supervision. Data was collected throughout the programs and analyzed after it ended.

The key findings/learning that emerged from this cycle included:

1. The framework is effective for children with special needs. It supports both personal and group therapeutic processes and helps the children to establish a more 'positive' relationship with nature (see Chapter 5).
2. The original concepts and methods that were developed in the first cycle were found useful and were further developed: the strong connection that was made between the children and the 'Home in Nature' and the non-verbal and creative process it allowed, were developed into the 'Building a Home in Nature' therapy method (Chapter 5). Working with the dynamics introduced by the change of seasons, the concept of the 'Three-way relationship' (see Chapter 5) was developed.
3. Additional concepts and methods were highlighted: by working in non-verbal and creative ways, 'art within nature' was developed. Incorporating this work into the framework of a journey in nature – the concept of 'therapy as a journey' emerged. The potential of the use of rituals was highlighted for the defining of the therapeutic (perhaps sacred) space, creating and maintaining a sense of the process's continuity and helping participants cope with changes. (For full details see Chapter 5).
4. The basic Nature Therapy framework that was developed is being applied by other practitioners.
5. The framework can be integrated into the practices of other practitioners from other professions, widening their ways of working while allowing them to develop their own integrated style.
6. The framework can be effectively implemented in schools settings.

Concluding this cycle, it seemed there was a need to train more professionals who would be able to further develop the work. In addition, I felt that much more remained to be unfolded. Therefore a third Action Research cycle was designed.

7.1.3 Action Research Cycle 3: Developing Intensive Training for Practitioners

One of the main implications of Cycle 2 was that it was necessary to develop more training. This necessity was not only due to the growing need for practitioners who could 'do the work', but also due to my wish to learn more about Nature Therapy and further develop its framework. Ending Cycle 2, I understood the potential that the development of training had for conceptualization and theory building process. I have learned that the practitioners' experience could unfold the theory.

Being professionals, their voices included not only the personal meaning that the experience had for them, but also the professional one. The combination of the two made the conceptualization and articulation process easier. From this point onwards, I did not continue the research with clear questions. I was still aiming at exploring and developing the theory, concepts and methods that would support and improve Nature Therapy application, yet, the best thing to do seemed to be, to keep an open mind and wait to see what would emerge.

During this cycle four intensive trainings were designed and delivered in four different settings (different environment, time of year and duration). Data was collected and analyzed at the end of each.

The key findings/learning that emerged from this cycle included:

1. Working for intensive short periods of time with mature groups of professionals, in remote, isolated and more extreme natural environments, expanded the previous conceptualizations into additional dimensions. Most of these concepts emerged during the analysis phase that took place after the workshops.

The new concepts and methods generated in this cycle included:

- a. 'Touching nature': this concept related to process and meaningful stories that emerged from work that the client did directly with nature (physical contact or play) with the therapist serving as a witness. Telma's story (Chapter 6) provides an example for a process that unfolded this concept.

- b. Incorporating nature in the creation of rituals: this concept evolved from situations in which nature's elements and their uncontrollable dynamics were incorporated into dramatic work. Miriam's story (Chapter 6) provides an example for a process that unfolded this concept.
- c. Connecting to the universal truth and cycle of nature: this concept emerged from situations in which the observation of a natural phenomenon gave the client 'larger than self' insights and meanings. Rachel's story (Chapter 6) and Linda's story (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Appendix 3.5) provide examples for a process that unfolds this concept.
- d. Working in the intermediate zone; between fantasy and (concrete) reality, the home environment and the natural one: this concept emanated during the conceptualization encounters and the analysis of the full moon training. Its articulation related to difficulties that participants had making the transition between the workshop environment and everyday life. Examples for this process can be found in Chapter 6. The method 'taking sand home' was developed to answer these difficulties and was implemented at a later time during the same training.
- e. Playing in the cosmic sandbox: when I used the 'sand play' method for the first time, during the full moon training, I was not aware of the unique potential that it's adaptation to a natural setting had. The transpersonal dimension of this method unfolded during this training and during the conceptualization encounter that followed it. Examples of this process can be found in Chapter 6.

It seems that most of the concepts can be related to as a further application of the basic Nature Therapy concept of the 'three-way relationship'. It develops this concept more on a transpersonal level, while inviting the client to seek additional meanings through the direct encounter with nature. I was not aware of this transpersonal dimension when I started the Ph.D. process.

Concluding this cycle it seemed there was space to develop longer academic trainings, allowing further development of the framework as well as providing the new field with more practitioners. Therefore a third Action Research cycle was designed.

7.1.4 Action Research Cycle 4: Developing Longer Academic Trainings

This cycle aimed at developing longer academic trainings. A one-year-long training programme was started at Tel Hai College during the academic year 2004. Two-year programmes were developed and are running at the moment; one at Tel Hai College and the other in Telem, Seminar Hakibbuzim College in Tel Aviv.

Entering this research cycle with an orientation similar to the third cycle, I was keeping an open mind and waiting to see what new learning would take place.

The key findings/learning that emerged from this cycle included:

1. Throughout this cycle and the observation of the learning made within the student's practicum, the previous concepts and methods were developed.
2. Exploring the basic idea of 'nature as a therapeutic setting' in more depth, and being challenged by students who studied the issue and did their practicum, the concept of 'choosing the right setting' was developed (An example of this process can be found in Appendices 3.5 and 3.6).

It is important to state that from this cycle onwards the fast tempo of developing concepts slowed down, giving way to an examination and in-depth understanding of the concepts that had already developed. This process also related to the professional dialogues that were formed between the students and training staff and between the training staff and me; dialogues that involved critics and questions about what is Nature Therapy.

Another important element that this cycle created, relates to the process of conceptualization and theory construction begun by Nature Therapy students and other professionals. The process started with assignments that the students handed in during the training and continued with independent collaborations they conducted.

This progress is important for the further development of the field, as it widens its theoretical and academic dialogue into perspectives which are not necessarily my own.

7.1.5 Cycle 5: Creating a Professional Community and Dialoguing with Other Professions

This cycle can be addressed as a direct development of the previous cycles and especially the third one. During this cycle, articles were published and presentations at psychological and educational conferences were made. In addition, two Nature Therapy-oriented conferences were held and the Nature Therapy Association was formed. Some evidence relating to the views of key figures in the field, regarding the status of Nature Therapy can be found in Appendix 2.

This cycle made an important contribution to the field, as it supported practitioners. They learned how to present their Nature Therapy work to the 'larger' professional and academic world. It also helped to create a critical dialogue between Nature Therapy and 'the other' therapeutic professions, distinguishing the elements in which it resembles other therapeutic professions from those in which it is unique and different.

As this cycle did not include 'Nature Therapy field work', it seems that no new concepts or methods were created, but rather, it strengthened and further developed the former cycles.

7.1.6 Cycle 6: Elements from the Process that took Place in Parallel to the Previous Cycles

This cycle relates to the ongoing process of the framework's development. It took place throughout the cycles while focusing on its academic aspects. It supported the analytic phases, the academic articulation and writing. Writing this unit of the discussion crystallized for me the core of the Ph.D.'s framework.

7.1.7 Cycle 7: Issues that were Generated and Developed in relation to the Ph.D. Viva and the Examiner's Report

After the viva and the examiner's report, another cycle of learning was opened. It relates mainly to issues that concern the professional community and to the further development of the practice. This work included:

1. Writing a Chapter relating to the issue of NT ethics and to the relationship with nature in particular (Chap 7).
2. Writing a Chapter relating to NT limitations (Chapter 7).

These two Chapters have already been submitted as journal articles and hopefully will be published during the coming year. As such, this cycle may generate yet another cycle, one which relates to further work, beyond this Ph.D. ...

Table: 7.1

**Stages of the Action Research Cycle during which key Nature
Therapy Concepts and Methods were Developed**

Concept or Method Developed	Event/place within the Action Research Cycle during which it emerged or developed
<i>Nature as a therapeutic setting</i>	(a) Before the research, in the reflexive Chapter - the assumption that nature can be regarded as a therapeutic space. (b) Action Research Cycle 1: Work done with the autistic child (in the reflexive Chapter) – the first time I did therapy in nature and therefore the time that this idea about Nature Therapy emerged (c) Constant development since, throughout all cycles
<i>Touching nature</i>	Emerged in cycle 2, during the full moon training. Has been further developed since.
<i>Three-way relationship</i>	Emerged during Cycle 1, from all the preliminary work I did in nature. Has been further developed since.
<i>Incorporating nature in the creation of rituals</i>	Emerged in Cycle 2, during the full moon training. Has been further developed since.
<i>Connecting to universal truths and the cycle of nature</i>	I had personal experience before the Ph.D. Was generated as a concept during the full moon training and ever since.
<i>Working in the intermediate zone: between fantasy and (concrete) reality, the home environment and the natural one</i>	Emerged in Cycle 2, during the full moon training. Has been developed since
<i>Building a home in nature (method)</i>	Emerged in Cycle 1, during the work with Joseph. Has been developed since.
<i>Art within nature</i>	Emerged in Cycle 1 and conceptualized in Cycle 2. Has been developed since.
<i>Playing in the cosmic sand box (method)</i>	Conceptualized in Cycle 3, during the full moon training. Has been developed since.
<i>Taking sand home (method)</i>	Conceptualized in Cycle 3, during the full moon training. Has been developed since.

7.2 New Knowledge that the Ph.D. Has Developed

This section summarizes the main elements: Philosophy, Theory, Concepts and Methods that were developed, explored and presented in this Ph.D. It includes short definitions or illustrations of each, highlighting their connection and placing them within the larger psychotherapeutic context. As this Chapter was written last, it seems that the definitions it includes are clearer than the original ones; those were presented in previous Chapters. It's important to state that all these concepts and methods were articulated in a specific research process with its own typicality. It is therefore limited and should not be generalized.

7.2.1 Developing a Fresh Eco-socio-psychological Philosophy Based on the Evolution of the Human-Nature Relationship

Chapters 2.2. and 2.3 presented a fresh Eco-psycho-social philosophy based upon the exploration of the evolution of the human - nature relationship. This philosophy, or theoretical assumption, claims that the process of distancing from nature is parallel to the transition from a communal, traditional and religious way of living into the individualistic, scientific, industrial secular one. This fresh standpoint highlights the transition from traditional-medicine-modes of work to modern-psychotherapy-modes, including the absence of spiritual and bodily experience in the latter.

This fresh standpoint gives the relationship with nature another justification, as it highlights the healing potential that incorporating nature in a therapeutic practice may have, in general, and the inclusion of mind-body-spirit aspects, in particular.

It seems that this theory can have wide social and political applications, as it highlights the impact that nature and the contact with it have upon people's psychological well-being, positive health and happiness. It seems therefore that this theory can be used to justify nature conservation from a therapeutic and humanistic perspective.

7.2.2 Concepts and Methods that the Ph.D. Developed

This section is the Ph.D.'s largest contribution to knowledge. The contribution is presented throughout the thesis and mainly in Chapters 2.3, 2.5 and Chapter 6. Further developments of this framework can be found in Appendix 3.

The framework can be divided into theory, concepts and methods (techniques). The concepts that were developed in the thesis offer practitioners specific (Nature Therapy-oriented) viewpoints to observe and relate to the setting, the therapeutic process and the relationships it contains. Cross references are used to connect between the current description and their earlier development throughout the Ph.D.

7.2.2.1 Nature as a therapeutic setting

This concept is one of the basic concepts of Nature Therapy (Chapter 2.3.). It seeks to help the therapist relate to specific environmental characteristics when choosing ways to incorporate them into practice. The basic concepts implement issues such as the choice of setting (Appendices 3.5 and 3.6), the therapeutic relationship and hierarchy, methods that will be used and even the stories that will be unfolded in the process (Chapter 6). The basic assumption that underpins this concept is that 'nature' is more than just a 'therapeutic setting' or backdrop, as it has its own independent dynamic and life.

7.2.2.2 Touching nature

This concept is based on the assumption that when a person touches nature in an experiential way, his/her inner nature is also touched (Chapter 2.3). Working with the concept of *Touching nature* can help the therapist use the direct encounter with nature and the sensations, feelings and images that it may trigger to develop the work; working both on the person-to-person level as well as the transpersonal one. This concept is connected to the Ecopsychological concept of the 'ecological self' and has important implications for the Nature Therapy concept of the *Three-way relationship* (Chapter 6). In many ways, the potential of Nature Therapy is based on this concept and much of the therapist's work is based on forming the 'right' atmosphere that will

allow this authentic encounter between person and nature to take place. The work with *Touching nature* relates to the concept of 'contacting nature as a medium to reconnect body, spirit and mind', as it can be used to expand the therapeutic, cognitive and verbal psychotherapeutic discourse into additional dimensions.

7.2.2.3 The Three-way relationship: client-therapist-nature

This basic concept integrates the ideas of *Nature as a therapeutic setting* and *Touching nature*, developing them in a way that highlights the applications they have upon the relationships between the therapist, the client and the natural environment. As such, this concept invites the therapist to extend the classic therapist-client oriented relationship, to include nature as a third partner (Chapter 2.3 and Chapter 5). This standpoint has important implications for issues such as authority, hierarchy, therapeutic contract, therapeutic alliance and choice of methods that will be used (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). This concept also relates to Ecopsychological and transpersonal ideas, as it can be used to widen the person-to-person dialogue into the wider 'larger than self' one (Chapter 6 and Appendices 3.4 and 3.5).

7.2.2.4 Incorporating nature in the creation of rituals

Incorporating nature in the creation of rituals is one of the central principles underlying nature therapy. It is based on an attitude that relates to therapy as a modern form of ritual that can continuously help making transitions from one phase and status to another; healing from pain and coping with uncertainties (Chapter 2.3 and Appendices 3.4 and 3.5). Acknowledging the impacts of modernism and post-modernism upon society, including the decreasing collective spiritual, bodily and transpersonal meaning making and healing experiences, both in everyday life and in classical psychotherapeutic discourse, this concept aims not only to help the therapist incorporate nature into the process of creating (secular) rituals, but also to use the elements of nature to help the client normalize complex stories, find additional (transpersonal) meanings and get a wider sense of belonging as he engages with larger creation. This concept adds to the ritualistic orientation of Drama Therapy, by adding nature, the third partner; expanding this creative and non-verbal mode of work into

additional mind – body - spirit dimensions (Chapters 2.2; 2.3; 5; 6 and Appendices 3.4 and 3.5). *Incorporating nature in the creation of rituals* is a concept inviting the therapist to relate to the process in a specific way. It is also a method inviting clients to explore their issues through an experiential experiment that takes place in the here and now, between person and nature. It seems that the incorporation of this Shamanic concept is a key reason why most Nature Therapy work done so far, has taken place in groups (and not in a 'one to one' setting).

7.2.2.5 Connecting to universal truths and the cycles of nature

Connecting to universal truths and cycles of nature unifies two concepts that have been developed in the Ph.D.: (a) *Working with universal truths* (Chapters 2, 3) and (b) *Connecting to the universe and cycles of nature* (Chapter 6). This concept relates to the transpersonal aspect of Nature Therapy, as it invites the person to become more aware of the parallel stories that exist between his/her life cycle and the universal one; the cycle of life and death, past, present and future.

Working with this concept can help a person normalize and accept difficult stories (which are hard to explain rationally), establish a sense of continuity, find additional meaning and extend his/her sense of belonging and oneness. This concept is implemented in the concept of *Incorporating nature in the creation of rituals*, as it can help in giving the ritual a larger sense of eternity and holiness. It also links with Ecopsychology (and the concept of 'the ecological self'), as it honors nature's wisdom and works through the interconnectedness between people and nature. Much of the work presented in Chapter 6, including the choice of the specific setting, relates to this concept. For additional reference to the concept's development and examples for ways it was implemented see Berger and McLeod (2006; Appendix 3.5), Linda's and David stories, and *The influence of the change of seasons* (Chapter 5).

7.2.2.6 Working in the intermediate zone: Between fantasy and (concrete) reality, the home environment and the natural one

This concept uses the qualitative difference existing between the natural environment and the urban everyday environment in a dialectic way (see Chapter 2.3: *Working in the intermediate zone: Between fantasy and reality*). The first aspect of this concept uses 'nature's' distance (and difference) from the everyday environment to help participants enter the 'as-if' dramatic reality, allowing them to experience themselves in any way they wish, while taking from this (remote) experience into their everyday life. The second aspect relates to the fact that 'nature' (unlike the theatre stage, which is a vacuum waiting for performances and stories) is a 'real' and live place that contains its own stories, phenomena and dynamics. In other words, we can work on a personal story simultaneously with a parallel 'natural' story that takes place in the background. For example, a person can be telling a story about rejuvenation and personal growth side by side to the blooming flowers brought by spring. This dialectic between the two realities unfolds a great therapeutic potential; not only in its psychological and narrative aspects, but also as it allows the person to feel connected and part of the universe. In this respect, this concept can be addressed as an extension of the concept *Connecting to universal truths and cycles of nature*. This element is illustrated several times throughout the Ph.D., i.e.: in Linda's story (Appendix 3.5), in Rachel's story (Chapter 6) and in Brian's story (Appendix 2.4).

The concept *Working in the intermediate zone: Between the home environment and the natural environment* follows the last concept, as it uses nature's qualitative difference as a pathway from which the client can observe and explore his/her functioning, relationships and general life experiences in his/her home environment. Then, after exploring other ways of being, s/he can take relevant elements home. This concept is also used in Adventure Therapy, where most of the work takes place in remote locations. The method *Taking sand home* that will be detailed later, is the concept's application in practice. The development of this concept and its implementations in practice have been illustrated several times throughout the Ph.D., i.e., Appendix 3.5 Ran's story, and Chapter 6: Rachel's dragonfly's story.

7.2.2.7 Choosing 'the right' setting

This concept invites the therapist to explore different options of settings before choosing the 'right one' in which to do the specific therapeutic work. It is based on the idea that each environment includes different characteristics, influencing the process in various ways. As such, the therapist is invited to choose between the specific characteristics of the client, the therapeutic aim, the intervention's budget etc., before choosing the habitat in which the work will take place. Those considerations include not only questions about the location but also about the choice of time (season and time of day) and duration of the intervention. This concept is another key element in the framework as it relates to the concepts of *Nature as a therapeutic setting* and of *The three-way relationship*.

Examples of different choices of settings (two-hour weekly sessions in a school courtyard, several days intensive near the river, monthly encounters on full moon nights on the beach) and the way they influenced the process can be found in all the Chapters that include examples from practice.

7.2.3 Methods and Techniques that the Ph.D. Has Developed

The methods that the Ph.D. developed answer the practical aspect of the framework, providing techniques that can help practitioners decide what kind of intervention to choose, or in other words 'what to do' in the therapeutic sessions. The techniques support the experimental and creative orientation of the approach as they seek to offer an experiential and non-verbal framework to explore therapeutic issues. Relating to the context of this Ph.D. and its space limitations, most of the methods that were developed and presented focus on the ways 'nature' can be integrated in the process (and not on general therapeutic qualities such as empathy, containment, non-judgment and so on).

7.2.3.1 Building a home in nature

This method, which can also be addressed as a model is based on the assumption that the process of choosing, building and maintaining a home in nature is a key element in the therapeutic process that takes place in nature. The model offers another perspective for work on basic issues such as belonging, borders and control

exploring the relationships and interactions that take place between the person who is building the home and the nature in which it is built.

The model relates to the concept of *Working in the intermediate zone: between fantasy and reality, the home environment and natural one*, as it questions the location of the home, the elements it contains, the materials used to build it, its state of permanence or mobility, the nature of its borders, the way the person relates to nature and so on... to reflect parallel issues in the person's everyday life. In this sense the 'home' not only symbolizes the individual's story, but furthermore offers the person a chance to change elements within it (during the rebuilding and re-shaping process) helping him/her to take the learning into his/her real life.

Relating to the concept of the *Three-way relationship* and the unexpected changes nature can have upon the 'home', the model can be also used to develop flexibility and help people deal with the unexpected. The model also offers a diagnostic tool, an aspect that needs further exploration and development.

The development of this model and its implementation in practice has been illustrated several times throughout the Ph.D. (Chapters 2.3 and 5 and Appendix 2.5)

7.2.3.2 Art within nature

In many ways, the entire framework of Nature Therapy developed by this Ph.D., can be regarded as implementations of the following model. *Art within nature* is an overall name for all the creative and non-verbal techniques that the approach uses: Story-telling, story-making, art, drama, movement and dance; as long as their use includes an aware relationship with nature and its elements and not one that relates to nature as merely a setting or materials provider. The potential of the incorporation of these techniques into Nature Therapy relates to the way that non-verbal work, the use of metaphors, spontaneity and bodily experience can help the person engage with nature and expand his/her 'ecological self'. *Art within nature* is directly connected to the concept of *Touching nature* and to the concept of *Incorporating nature into the*

creation of rituals. Implementations of this model (without using its explicit name) can be found in all the Chapters that include examples of practice.

7.2.3.3 Playing in the cosmic sandbox

Playing in the cosmic sandbox unifies several methods that were specifically developed for natural sandy environments. The framework can be addressed as a nature-oriented adaptation of the Jungian 'sand play' technique (Ryce-Menuhin, 2003), using spontaneous and creative activity in the sand as a pathway to the world of metaphors and archetypes. The potential of this model is presented in details throughout Chapter 6, highlighting different ways in which the use of the concept of *connecting to the universal truth and cycle of nature* expanded the process into transpersonal and spiritual dimensions and helped connect between the fantastic and the concrete (concrete symbolism) (For specific implementations see Chapter 6: Stories in the sand, figures in the sand, digging for metaphors).

7.2.3.4 Taking sand home

This method, perhaps framework, offers ways to link the learning gained in the sessions that took place in nature and the person's home environment:

1. Giving participants (concrete) homework: specific things to do and practice at home, assignments that can help them assimilate the learning in their real life and make the changes they wished for more accessible.
2. Conducting non-facilitated meetings of two kinds:
 - a. With a close person (family member or friend): Sharing experiences from the work in nature including insights and wishes they brought with them. If the learning is relevant to the person with whom the meeting is conducted, it is recommended to talk about it and then explore ways to bring the change into their life.
 - b. With a group member: Sharing and exploring the experience of returning home. The aim of this framework is to form 'companions for the journey' who can share memories from the event and who are familiar with the kind of work it involves.

This framework can be offered in-between the facilitated encounters; utilizing the group's power to include, hold and normalize. It can help participants smooth the transition between Nature Therapy sessions and everyday life.

This framework has been presented in Chapter 6.

7.2.4 Other Elements that the Work Developed

This section relates to other elements that were developed throughout the Ph.D. These elements relate to Nature Therapy and have implications for other psychotherapy disciplines. In addition and relating to Action Research Cycle 4.2.7 (Issues that were generated and developed in relation to the Ph.D., Viva and the Examiner's report) three important issues were developed: the first relates to the field's attitudes towards nature, the second to the limitations of practice and the third to issues relating to its ethics. As each of these issues was novel to the Ph.D. and required serious consideration, they are presented as separate sub-Chapters at the end of this section. The last two have been articulated as journal articles and have been submitted for publication.

7.2.4.1 Developing a framework that can be implemented with different kinds of populations

During the time that this Ph.D. was being prepared, the framework it developed was being used and explored with different client groups: Children with special needs, adults with different therapeutic needs and the elderly. The implementations used the concept of *choosing the right setting* to adapt the work to the characteristics and needs of each clientele. Relating to the literature review on the exploration of other kinds of therapeutic work taking place in nature, it seems that the novelty of this Ph.D. relates also to the options of taking part in nature-oriented therapy it offers some of these populations. It seems that this development relates not only to the concept of choosing the right setting, but also to the way it relates to nature and to the ways it incorporates creative and non-verbal methods.

7.2.4.2 Developing an integrative therapeutic framework

The idea of an integrative theory has been presented in the introduction to this Ph.D. thesis and has been developed throughout the work (Chapters 2.3, 5 and 6 and in Appendices 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5 and 3.6), showing ways in which it can be implemented in the development of the framework. It has highlighted ways in which concepts from Adventure Therapy, Art and Drama Therapy, Gestalt, the Narrative approach, Ecopsychology and Transpersonal psychology were incorporated together with new concepts into the formation of the Nature Therapy framework. Relating to this process, this Ph.D. offers a fresh example, perhaps a method, in which such integrated theories can be developed.

7.2.4.3 Developing alternative ways to relate to the hierarchy between therapist and client

Based on the concept of nature as a setting and the characteristics of this live and dynamic environment, the Ph.D. offers an alternative way to relate to the issue of the hierarchy between therapist and client. As it places them both in a space which neither of them owns or controls, it flattens the classic hierarchy, while offering them a way to construct a more equal and shared relationship. This form of relationship does not mean that the roles are not clear, but rather that more and more 'control' and ownership over the process is handed over to the client. The *Building a home in nature* method highlights the implementation of this idea in practice, as it presents a way in which the client and therapist can jointly design, build and shape the environment in which the work will take place. Another aspect of this issue relates to the concept of the *Three-way relationship* as it opens and extends the therapeutic relationship; adding nature as a partner. Examples of ways in which this idea has been implemented in the Ph.D. can be found in Chapters 2.3, 5 and 6.

7.2.4.4. Developing ways to include spiritual and transpersonal experiences in the psychotherapeutic process.

The option of including spiritual, transpersonal and bodily experiences as part of the Nature Therapy process has been explored throughout the Ph.D. Concepts and methods that support this process were conceptualized, developed and presented

throughout the whole study and in Chapters 2.2, 2.3, 6 and Appendices 3.4 and 3.5 in particular. It seems that the framework developed includes rituals, symbolic and archetypal work, and direct physical and meta-physical connection with nature, all of which allow clients to expand their sense of self and widen their spiritual dimensions. This framework seems to relate to several basic concepts of Transpersonal psychology: Jung's concept of archetype and the collective unconscious; Grof's ideas of identification (with animals, plants and earth) (both relate also to Ecopsychology) and Maslow's concepts of peak experience and 'being'.

Concluding this Ph.D. it seems appropriate to highlight several transpersonal concepts with a particular connection and affinity for the framework that this work has developed. Relating to Maslow's concept of peak experiences and being, it seems that Nature therapy's techniques and its mode of work can help clients enter a mode of being, perhaps a level of consciousness that can make them more aware and open, and as such more prepared to encounter peak experiences and/or being moments. Relating Rowan's (2005) statement about the 'slipperiness' and 'glimpsedness' of such experiences, that "we can then either ignore them (the peak experience) or make much of them, take them as meaningful or meaningless" (Rowan 2005: 20) it seems that NT helps clients not miss or overlook them, fully encounter them (and) and experience them on a deeper level. This standpoint is seen throughout Chapter 6, using different rituals and mind-body-imagination methods that open the participant's awareness to the 'here and now' and to the surroundings. Specific examples of such work can be seen in the introduction to 'chakra' work, combined with imaginary work that took place before participants 'did as they wanted' in Chapter 6.2.6, or in similar introduction work, which was facilitated by the 'pick out one star and look at it for a while', and the 'six piece story making' activity that followed in Chapter 6.3.6. The last example also shows a way in which NT connects the spiritual and imaginative dimension with a psychological one. It starts with a body-mind exercise, looking at the stars and continues on to a creative exploration of the themes which emerged: "I asked the group to stand in the shallow water and be attentive to the cyclic rhythm of the waves (listen and feel). Then, after doing the same chakra activity we did in the first workshop, I used the framework of the 'six piece story making' (Lahad, 1992) and guided a simple imaginary journey: 'Pick out one star and look at it for a while'... When this exercise concluded, I asked the participants to return to the bridges they

had built before and sit or stand next to them, imagine that the bridge on the sand is symbolic of a bridge (or crossroads) which they have faced in their life (past, present or future) and imagine themselves at this point. Then, they must use the elements (sand and water) to create a three-dimensional representation relating to the six questions I asked before. It seems that there is a strong therapeutic influence to this transition between the spiritual-imaginative work with the stars to more personal-psychological work – using story making to deal with personal and psychological issues; moving from one dimension to another. It can be seen how the work (that was presented before) contributed to Neil's psychological insights about his fresh relationship: *"During the night I tried very hard to build a bridge between the two spaces (my space and my partner's space). Returning at sunrise opened the option of digging a tunnel as a way to connect the two spaces. The play in the sand opened this new option as it helped me let go of the previous plans"*. This element can be seen also in Miriam's story (that followed Neil's work): *"as I arrived in the morning I realized that the work (the sculpture) was transformed. In the beginning I did not understand it but then I realized that the tide has brought in sand that re-sculptured my work. Now my work is to accept this change, from a slim girl to a pregnant woman..."*. Miriam's story demonstrates the transpersonal potential that NT includes in general, and the unique impact that the connection of the cycles of nature can have, in particular. Neil and Miriam's stories also present ways in which creative, non-verbal work can support such a process, in general, and help people share experiences which are difficult to express verbally. It seems important to say that it is not only the methods and exercises NT uses but also the open mind and perhaps level of consciousness of the therapist, as he not only acknowledges these experiences and stories relating to them, but furthermore seeks to extend them and give them actuality. This can be seen in Chapter 6.5.2, in the work that was developed around Rachel's coincidental encounter with the dragonfly. This event demonstrates the way in which the therapist held the magical event for the client and gave meaning to a potential peak experience that the client might have overlooked and missed, due to her cynical attitude towards spiritual and/or mystical experiences.

Relating to the examples above and to additional implementations of the concept of the *Three-way relationship* (Chapter 2.6.5; 6.3.4; 6.6), this framework not only includes transpersonal dimensions, but furthermore offers ways to include nature in transpersonal process and in existing transpersonal frameworks. The use of techniques such as visualization, guided fantasy, symbol work and mind-body work, offers ways in which contact with nature can enrich mystical experiences and a sense of oneness, and help develop a higher connection to the self and others. In keeping the integrity of the study and the above sayings, it seems important to qualify and say that the current study did not aim to study the overall relevance of transpersonal psychology to NT as a whole. Therefore, the above sayings make no claim that transpersonal experiences are present in every NT work or that all clients who take part in NT have spiritual experiences. To answer these questions further inquiry may be needed.

7.2.4.5 Developing and defining Nature Therapy's attitude towards nature – from an instrumental to an artistic standpoint

In Chapter 2.3 NT's attitude towards nature is questioned: Does it relate to nature strictly from an instrumental viewpoint, i.e. valuing nature only in relation to its usefulness in terms of its human interests, or mainly from an intrinsic standpoint, i.e. valuing nature itself with no dependence on outside factors or its benefits for people. The first matches an anthropocentric standpoint, whereas the second claims an opposite view (Chapter 2.3). These polarities are also seen in the difference between Adventure Therapy practice, which mostly relates to nature as a setting and provider of challenges for a task-orientated process (Chapter 3) and the Ecopsychological viewpoint, which emphasizes the interconnection and interdependence that exists between people, claiming therapy as a vehicle to re-connect people and nature and to change people's attitude towards the environment (Chapter 2.3). With reference to the above, NT's standpoint towards nature may seem ambivalent. Sometimes it appears to relate to nature from an instrumental standpoint, with nature merely a setting; acknowledging its benefits for clients (Chapter 5 & 6). At other times, it relates to nature from an intrinsic standpoint, recognizing its moral, spiritual, symbolic, aesthetic or cultural importance (Chapter 2.2; 2.3; 5 & 6). Yet, if we consider this from a wider, more inclusive standpoint, one that seeks to integrate perspectives rather

to separate them, the intrinsic value that NT holds towards nature can also include instrumental attitudes that acknowledge it a resource.

This view towards nature seems to parallel the ways people address each other: relating to the other as object, cognizant of different elements that the relationship can provide, while simultaneously acknowledging their autonomous and independent value. In this respect, Nature Therapy can address nature as a resource and materials-provider and at the same time acknowledge its independent and autonomous values. This way of addressing nature has been demonstrated in Chapter 5, using natural elements to build the *Home in nature* and at the same time acknowledging the rights of the animals that live there. This standpoint can be also seen in Chapter 6, using the beach for personal growth and at the same acknowledging its spiritual and moral values, by caring for it and cleaning it.

Relating to the way Rowan describes personal (and transpersonal) development (Rowan 2005), it seems that this process, moving from an instrumental and anthropocentric attitude towards nature, to a more spiritual and intrinsic one, can be viewed not only in terms of relationships with nature and the impact on environmental ethics and nature conservation policies, but also as stages in personal (and community) development. This dialectic may represent basic identity and moral questions of our modern culture, as well as relationships and moral issues that face individuals (Chapter 2.2 & 2.3). It seems that this important issue is particularly relevant to the further development of the field and its code of ethics in particular.

7.2.4.6 Developing an ethical code for Nature Therapy

It seems that each therapeutic discipline and profession must have an ethical code. As this Ph.D. has aimed at articulating and developing a framework (and not a profession) it may be that the development of an ethical code is beyond its academic limitations. Nevertheless, relating to its Action Research orientation and its strong connection to practice, a basic conceptualization and discussion of this issue here can help its further development, which will be probably be best accomplished by a professional association, a group of people who represent the profession.

This sub-Chapter will present and discuss issues relating to the development of a code of ethics for the practice of Nature Therapy and to unique issues that it should

consider, such that relate to its relationship with nature. It will not attempt to present an ethical code but rather to highlight complexities and questions that its full development may seek to answer. The sub-Chapter will begin with an overview of ethical issues which are discussed in parallel disciplines: Art Therapy, Psychology, Adventure Therapy, Animal Assisted Therapy and Horticultural Therapy and continue by suggesting unique issues that Nature Therapy's ethical code should address. The sub-Chapter will conclude with recommendations for issues that a future development of such an ethical code can consider.

A professional code of ethics – what is it...

Ethics is a philosophical concept that deals with values, morality and moral behavior (Casher, 2003; McLeod, 2003; Shapler, 2004). **Professional ethics** relates to the manner and conduct of a professional group and or association (Shapler, 2004). Casher (2003) defined professional ethics as "an organized perception of the practical principles of the behavior of a defined profession" (Casher, 2003). This ethics should include a wide perception of the complexities and complications that the profession may include and develop a collection of rules and regulations and guidelines that relate to them. This list is the professional ethical code (Shapler, 2006). Professional ethics are derived from the professional identity of the profession, in relation to its values and its moral context (Exler, 2007; Casher, 2003; Casher, 2006; Vaserstine, 2003). It deals with the excellence of the profession as it will be expressed, behaved and performed in practice. Generally speaking, the aim of the professional code of ethics is to insure good practice and to protect the clients from immoral and unethical behavior of professionals who may hurt and/or harm the client (McLeod 2003 [Peled 2003; www.yahat.org/ethics.asp](http://www.yahat.org/ethics.asp)). This is true in all cases, and in the case of disciplines that relate to therapy and health in particular, a practice that includes a strong moral and ethical dimension (McLeod, 2003).

Different professions will have different codes of ethics (Shapler, 2004) that will address unique issues relating to the professional identity and practice of the profession (Exler, 2007). As the code of ethics relates to the professional identity and as such also to qualifications and trainings needed to join the specific professional group, it can also help to distinguish the profession and those who work in it from

other professions. It can stand as a guard, insuring the quality and standards of the profession (Exler, 2007).

It seems that most professional ethical codes should include:

1. A description of the identity of the profession.
2. A list of the basic values and principles that guide the activities of the professional group. In most cases it will include universal values such as professionalism, integrity, loyalty, respect for human rights, autonomy and individualism, for family and democracy.
3. A list of the ethical standards of the profession (Shapler, 2004).

An examination of the ethical codes of the Israel psychologists association (Peled, 2003) and of the Israel expressive art therapists association (The ethical code of the Israeli expressive art's therapy. 9/5/08) shows that both relate to four underpinning principles: the promotion of the psychological well-being of the client, professionalism, integrity and social responsibility. Their list of ethical standards relates to the relationship between therapists and their clients and to relationships between the therapists and their professional community.

As the theory and practice of the expressive art therapies relates and includes creative, spontaneous and bodily process, its ethical code includes sections that relate to issues such as the creative process, physical touch and physical intimacy. As it acknowledges their important role in the performance of this expressive practice, it does not seek to prohibit their use or set clearly restricting regulations about it, but rather to highlight complexities and ethical issues that their use may entail. These guidelines seek to allow the incorporation of 'gray areas', while helping to insure a high level of professionalism and a high level of moral and ethical standards. This example shows how a specific therapeutic profession widened the ethical code of a parallel, more traditional profession (psychology) and adopted it to its specific principle, framework and practice. It shows ways in which this ethical code varies from one that was developed for a parallel discipline.

As these forms of therapy take place indoors and work from an anthropocentric standpoint, it is not surprising that neither codes of ethics (of the Israeli psychologist association and the Israeli expressive art therapy association) relates to the relationship with the environment, in general, and to relationships with

nature in particular (Peled, 2003). This should be included in ethical codes that relate to professions that do include and/or relate to nature as part of their practice.

Developing an ethical code for Nature Therapy

The previous section of this sub-Chapter outlined the overall concept of a professional ethical code. It related to its general structure and content and highlighted ways in which each discipline and/or profession can match it to the unique characteristics of their practice. This issue was demonstrated by the way that the Israeli expressive art therapy association had added on elements that relate to artistic and expressive process; elements that did not exist in the parallel ethical code of the Israeli psychologist's association.

Nature Therapy takes place in nature. It works in creative ways, while relating to nature as a live partner in the process. It acknowledges both nature's instrumentalist and intrinsic values; working in an intermediate zone that allows their co-existence (Chapter 2.3). It seems that this view towards nature is parallel to ways people address each other: relating to the other in terms of objects, acknowledging different elements that these relationships can provide and at the same time acknowledging their autonomous and independent value. In this respect, Nature Therapy can address nature as a resource and materials-provider, and at the same time acknowledge its independent and autonomous values (Chapter 2.3). It seems as if this dialectic attitude represents basic questions on identity and morals facing modern culture, as well as relationships and moral issues with which the individual must deal (Chapter 2.2 & 2.3).

Coming from this perspective, while relating to the underpinning philosophy of Nature Therapy, it would appear that the issue of 'nature' and the relationship with it are central to the development of this field's ethical code.

Reviewing parallel professional codes of ethics: Adventure therapy, Horticultural therapy and Animal assisted therapy

A review, of ethical codes and/or ethical considerations of parallel professions, was conducted, in order to highlight and discuss issues relating to nature in the development of an ethics code for Nature Therapy. The review related to similar fields - Adventure Therapy, Horticultural (gardening) Therapy and Animal Assisted Therapy

that relate to nature (in its broadest sense) in some way. It's important to say that all of these fields are young disciplines and are, as yet, in the early stages of their development. This relates both to academic aspects (theory and research) and to political aspects (forming professional associations, getting governmental recognition and running academic trainings). This may explain why none of them has yet developed and/or implemented an independent ethical code; one that relates to the issue of nature...

Adventure therapy

The Therapeutic Adventure Professional Group (TAPG) of the Association of Experiential Education (AEE) tried to develop an independent code of ethics for the field. This code deals mainly with issues concerning the use of challenge and risk, as they constitute an inherent part of this practice. In keeping with Adventure Therapy's instrumentalist standpoint towards nature, and as part of its anthropocentric attitude, (Chapter 3.1), it does not relate to ethical issues involved in the discipline's engagement with nature. It does not talk about ways in which the practice of Adventure Therapy may harm nature and does not develop ethical standards and/or guidelines that relate to this issue (Gass, 1993; Gillis & Gass, 2004; Newes, 2008). This standpoint towards nature has been receiving growing criticism from professionals and academics within this field (Beringer & Martin, 2003) similar to the criticism that this Ph.D. is raising.

Horticultural (gardening) therapy

Reviewing the literature, including the main book in the field written and edited by Simson and Straus (1998), it seems that this young profession has not yet developed a professional ethical code. Salomon (2005), an art therapist and horticultural therapist, who wrote about ethical issues in the garden setting, relates to the garden as an art product created and designed by the client in benefit of his/her process. She raises ethical issues that relate to the uniqueness of this setting, being open and alive, and also addresses ethical issues that relate to the relationship between therapist and client. She questions the therapist's ability to guard and protect this art form (which can be addressed as the client's extension) from other people passing by and/or from changes that nature might cause (Salomon, 2005). This anthropocentric

attitude relates to the garden (and nature) from an instrumentalist standpoint. It does not relate to the garden's autonomous and independent value, nor does it relate to ethical issues involving the garden's well-being, i.e. it does not relate to cases in which plants and/or animals directly and/or indirectly involved in the work might be hurt from it, or to behaviors that can protect them. It seems that this question of the attitude towards the garden and nature relates to the basic values of the profession, and as such to its professional identity. It may be that such a code of ethics will be developed with the further development and establishment of this young field.

Animal assisted therapy (AAT)

Although this young profession has not yet developed and/or established a recognized professional identity and/or established a professional association, it seems that it already started a dialogue about the development of an ethical code, in general, and about the relationships and behaviors with participating animals, in particular. Ksirer (2003) and Zamir (2007) highlight the importance of this issue, and suggest relating to the animals also from an intrinsic perspective, i.e. not just as objects that serve the therapeutic process and the needs of the clients, but also as living beings, with autonomous feelings and thoughts, who deserve acknowledgment, respect and honor in their own right (Ksirer, 2003; Zamir, 2007). Exler (2007) claims that since the animals are central to the process, moral issues relating to the relationship with them and their incorporation and use in therapy must be discussed and incorporated into the profession's ethical code (Exler, 2007). Exler (2007) and Zamir (2007) emphasise this issue by highlighting the fact that the animals (unlike the human therapist) did not choose to work as a co-therapist, and as such their incorporation in therapy must deal with basic ethical questions that might even challenge the profession's moral legitimacy.

In keeping with these claims, Zamir (2007) highlights the difference between assisting, using and utilizing the animals, stating that the cases in which the last takes place are immoral and should not be allowed by this ethical code (Zamir, 2007).

Aiming to connect these thoughts with practice, Ksirer (2003) presents a list of examples from practice in which animals got hurt, and suggests relating to them as a basis for the examination and development of an ethical code that will relate to these moral issues. She relates mainly to a sublimation process, in which the animals were

hurt and/or killed due to the client's expression of anger, and to cases in which their welfare wasn't properly considered. Concluding this review, AAT acknowledges the need for the development of a specific code of ethics; one that acknowledges the animals' rights and the complexities involved in incorporating these in practice.

Recommendations for future development of an ethical code for Nature Therapy

Relating to the Action Research orientation of this Ph.D., and its strong connection to practice, a list of recommendations that can support the further development of the field's ethics is given. It relates to the short review that this section has included and to the experience and standpoint of the author. Aiming to integrate voices of students who study NT and are part of the growing NT professional community, the recommendations also include their thoughts, as they were presented in discussions relating to the issue, during their first and second-year training (Berger, 2008). It's important to emphasise that this list is partial and should be addressed only as a set of recommendations. It does not attempt to serve as an ethical code, as it only offers ideas that can be used as guidelines for such future development. Being aware of the complexities of the issue and aiming to encourage a dialogue, parts of this list will be written as questions and not as clear sayings or statements.

1. An ethical code should be developed by a professional group that represents the members of the professional community and not by a single person. This should be done in a democratic and transparent process that relates and learns from similar process in other, more established professions.
2. The ethical code should relate to two main aspects:
 - A. The relationships between the people that the work includes - the therapist and clients, clients and professionals and between colleagues. Most of this can be developed in relation to existing ethics that have been developed by parallel professions and presented in the literature. In addition, unique issues that relate to the specific settings and methods used in NT should be addressed, for example:
 - a. Participants consciously choosing to do NT rather than indoors therapy.
 - b. The safety of participants - relating mainly to extreme environments such as deserts or work that takes place during the night.

- c. Assessing the capacity of the participant to cope with the environment. For example: not asking a person with a heart disease to climb a mountain.
 - d. Making it possible for participants to leave the therapy setting and go home whenever they want to. The ethical discussion of this issue may need special attention in cases of intensives that may take place in remote locations.
 - e. Obtaining informed consents from participants regarding the kind and level of experiences in nature that they are about to have and making sure that they have enough information in order to give meaningful consent. This information should relate both to issues concerning the environment, setting and methods.
 - f. The amount and content that trainings should include in order to make sure that those therapists doing NT are competent to make these assessments.
- B. The relationships between the people that take part in the work and nature - the therapist and nature and the clients and nature. Although it seems as if this aspect could relate to some of the issues that are raised in Animal Assisted Therapy, it would probably need to be developed in a more autonomous way. This aspect needs to address basic 'identity issues' of this profession that relate to the relationship and standpoint towards nature (Chapter 2.3) as well as to the classification of NT (educational or therapeutic). The examples will be given as questions that aim to invite further discussion.

Relating to the word 'therapy' in Nature Therapy:

- 3. Does Nature Therapy relate to nature from an instrumentalist or intrinsic standpoint and how does this attitude implicate practice and ethics?
- 4. Does NT only uses nature for the client's benefits or does it also concern itself with nature's autonomous protection and wellbeing?
- 5. Should the practitioner take care of nature, as his/her clinic or should it also be taken care of from a wider moral and intrinsic perspective?
- 6. Who is the center of the process: the client or nature, or is the center somewhere between? And in case the former is in the center – to what extent should nature pay the price?
- 7. How can one measure such a price and by which standards can he/she decide what kind of to what degree this is allowed?

8. In what ways will this choice influence sublimation processes in (and towards) nature and how will it influence therapeutic impacts and the limitations of practice?
 - Is educating for love and care for nature an item on Nature Therapy's agenda and part of its aims? Is this an external value or is it part of the discipline? In case it forms part of the discipline– where does it place NT, Is it a form of therapy with an environmental agenda or is it a form of environmental education with a therapeutic orientation? How does it relate to ethical issues?
 - Does NT inevitably involve the modeling (by the therapist) of respect for nature, or maybe even directly teaching participants to respect nature?
3. The ethical code should also relate to issues such as professionalism and professional responsibility as well as to the issue of professional standards and qualifications. It would probably also need to address courses, syllabuses and trainings-entry requirements. For example:
 - a. To what extent should the practitioner be familiar with the specific habitat and ecological conditions of the environment in which the work takes place? How does this relate to the safekeeping of habitats, as well as clients (this is particularly true in wilderness and extreme environments)? How does it impact trainings, syllabuses and supervisions?
4. Last but not least, and relating to all of the above, it would need to find a way to address gray areas that do not have an explicitly right and wrong answer...

Discussion and conclusion

Relating to existing literature, the experience and outlook of the author and the voices of students that study NT, this sub-Chapter has presented a list of recommendations for the development of an ethical code for NT. It highlighted complexities and gave examples of issues that may need special care. It seems that the issue of the relationships between the people that take part in the work and nature, i.e. paragraph number 2.B is of high importance and is likely also the most complex to deal with. Yet, prior to the actual process of creating this code the question of who will create it (that this sub-Chapter opened with) must be resolved. To concluding with a final suggestion, it seems right to recommend that three-four chosen people

from this community will band together with one or two external members who can critique the committee's work and make sure it is fair. It would probably help if some of this committee's members have prior experience with a similar process.

I hope that those who will be chosen to develop this code will do it not only with a high moral level, but also with love and respects for the diversity of the members who make up this professional group.

7.2.4.7 Thoughts about the limitations of the practice

Developing a therapeutic framework for practice obliges one also to be aware of its limitations: populations it is less suitable for, therapeutic issues it is less appropriate for and situations in which its use might be anti-therapeutic and even harm clients.

Relating to the context of this study and to the author's experience doing, teaching, supervising and researching Nature Therapy, this sub-Chapter seeks to highlight physical and psychological issues and present thoughts about the limitations of each.

Aiming to highlight ways in which practitioners can work within these limitations, it will add examples that present ways in which the framework can be adapted to the specific characteristics and needs of different clients. Being aware of the complexity of this attempt, and to the input of the person operating the framework, giving it life and turning it into a practice, this sub-Chapter will begin by sharing reflexive thoughts that will highlight the author's standpoint. All of the examples relate to work I have done during 2000-2007.

Defining a discipline's limitations – a question of perspective:

Before getting into the issue itself, I would like to highlight my standpoint:

1. It is the therapist and not the framework 'doing the work': Nature Therapy's framework is (just) a set of ideas that can help therapists (and client) make choices, choose the setting, plan interventions and do nature-oriented therapy. It is the choices and ways that the therapist uses the framework, in relation to the surroundings and the client, in planning the work and in doing the action that will actually make the framework work.

2. There is more than one way to relate to and do Nature Therapy: This Ph.D. has presented many different ways in which NT can take place: a variety of methods and concepts that can be used differently in varied settings and with different clients. Unlike approaches or models that have an exclusive, strict, 'one way of doing the form' attitude, NT invites the therapist to use the framework in a creative way; matching it to the needs of the client and the characteristics of the environment. Trying to define one way of doing it would work against its basic ideas and 'kill' it. In addition, it would limit the therapist's creativity and flexibility, which, according to Yalom, is one of the most important elements in therapy (Yalom 2002).
3. There are two type of application for practice that depend on nature of the environment. Nature Therapy's application is strongly connected to the environment in which it takes place. Working in a wilderness environment such as the desert, will invite different kind of experiences than an urban one, like a school courtyard. It will allow different encounters with the natural elements and with issues such as uncertainty, belonging and sanctity. This difference will have a big impact on the contract, the therapeutic alliance, the methods used, and the whole process. From my experience working and supervising work that took place in each of these types of environments, it seems as if can relate to them as two types of Nature Therapy. The major difference seems to relate to the intensity and power of encountering nature and the ability to use it to empower the process. One can work with the power of the desert wind or a desert sunrise only in the desert, just as one can work with an encounter with a wolf only in a location where one can actually encounters one... (Examples of these differences in practice can be seen in the two case studies in Chapters 5 & 6 and in Berger, 2007).

This perspective highlights the difference between the framework (as a set of concepts and methods) and its application in practice, which is carried out by a therapist in a specific environment. It points to the complexity of the attempt to define the discipline's limitations. Coming from an optimistic and creative standpoint makes for an attentive, creative and flexible facilitation style. It is one that seeks options

rather than holds on to conventions and norms, and looks for ways to adjust the framework to different populations with different characteristics and needs.

At the same time, relating to the attempt to define the discipline's limitations, the framework may 'not fit' or may require special adaptations to some kinds of populations and needs. These limitations are detailed below.

1. Physical limitation – working outdoors

Nature Therapy takes place in 'nature'. Relating to this phrase in a straightforward manner could automatically exclude people with physical difficulties. In other words, it may be less suitable for: Old people, the handicapped, young children and other populations that might find it hard to reach this environment and spend time in it.

Reference to the introduction of this sub-Chapter and the possibility of taking from the framework only elements suiting the client's characteristics and matching the work to his/her needs, opens an option of doing NT with people who are limited in their physical and/or movement abilities. Two examples that highlight this option are:

We can be out and play... NT with a group of adults with adolescent diabetes- an example from practice

Orit, head of the endocrinology department at Ziv hospital, Israel, was very hesitant before she agreed to start the pilot Nature Therapy program with a group of ten adults suffering from adolescent diabetes. "Ever since they were diagnosed most of them stopped being outdoors, stopped playing physical children's games (ball games, hide-and-seek, chase and so-on) and stopped going on school trips. Each injury can turn into a complex infection, not to mention a sudden decline in the level of the sugar in the blood, which can end in death. Are you sure that this kind of work is not dangerous for them?" The first encounter took place in a pine forest, a five-minute walk from the endocrinology department. After a few getting-acquainted-games were played in the circle, participants were invited to take some private time in the woods and find a natural element that symbolized a feeling or thought they had brought with them. Danny produced a stone and said: "this stone symbolizes the weight that the disease has added to my life. It's a constant worry, not to forget to check that the pump works. I would really like to put it aside or, at least, move it away

from the center..." Dina related to the shadows and light made by the sun and said "it's like my life cycles, times of darkness in which each sunlight gives hope. I am so happy to be here now, its something we have never done as a group". Julia brought seeds of yellow-weed and said "I want to free myself; to fly and go where the wind takes me, just like these seeds". Relating to this sharing, a conversation began, seeking commonly shared issues. It seemed like they were talking about different ways that each related to and coped with the sickness. Julia said that even though they meet regularly in the hospital for check-ups and treatments, they never talk about these issues. Ben said that he would love to hear more but now he is embarrassed "perhaps we can have some fun first, you know, like normal people do when they are in nature..." "Let's play" Julia said. The ice was broken when Ben shouted, "let's play tree chase. When you hold a tree I can't catch you, and when you don't I can. Go..." Everyone joined the game. Within seconds, the group of diabetic adults was playing like children, shouting and running all over the place, having fun... After several different games were played, Tali called everyone to join her around the fire she made and drink tea. Jokes were made about the amount of sugar in the tea and cookies, as everyone drew more closely into the circle around the fire. "I haven't had such fun for a long time" Danny said. "From the age of seven, when I was diagnosed, my parents hardly let me out to play. I do not remember if I have ever climbed a tree... It's great to do this with you all. It feels like we are all sharing these stories and like we are a family. I wonder what my parents would say if they could see me now..."

Short discussion

This story not only illustrates the way in which NT can take place with a group whose physical limitations are its issue. It also highlights the way in which NT can allow them to work on psychological issues stemming from their physical limitations. Meeting in nature, outside the hospital, helped participants let go of their conventional ways of encountering (as patients coming for treatment), and expose other characteristics and needs. Nature and the playful facilitation style helped them reconnect to childlike parts within, take part in games which allowed them to connect to the strength of their bodies, while strengthening their relationships with each other. Working in a natural environment, near the hospital, for a limited time-frame,

minimized the workshop's risks and reduced anxieties, while allowing this population to benefit from the creative encounter with nature.

The valley and I - NT with an old person – an example from practice

An example from practice

Jonathan, a ninety old man, had lived most of his adulthood in one of the kibbutzim of the Hula valley in the north of Israel. He had a clear mind and a healthy, though pain-ridden body. Jonathan could walk around the settlement, but going out of it had become a real difficulty. Towards his ninetieth birthday, his grandchildren invited him to take autobiographical journey, using NT as the main medium for work. Under Jonathan's guidance, I took him by car for short trips around places in the valley which he loved. Upon reaching each place, we stopped and took time to be. Each place revealed a certain story, which I typed into the laptop. It seemed like Jonathan's life was imprinted on this landscape, as if it was the container of so many memories and parts of his personality. In our last encounter, Jonathan chose to take me to an area that has been re-flooded and developed in the middle of the valley. He said that although this place was very meaningful for him, he had not visited it since it was re-flooded fourteen years ago. Entering the reservation, Jonathan grew very excited. "I can't believe they are here again, I can't believe it. I haven't seen them for so many years. Aren't they beautiful?" he said, pointing to the pelicans. Reaching the lake, he asked me to stop the car, got out and started walking excitedly. I left the laptop in the car and joined him. "Look, can you see these cormorants, look how they dive. Do you know what great fishermen they are?" he said. Joining Jonathan, I realized that he was walking with a fast tempo and an assertiveness I had never witnessed before. After a while he stopped, and sat down on the ground. "Only now I realize how much I have missed this place. I remember it from the days it was still swamps, before we dried it out, before these roads were built and also before you were born. It was a different decade. We had time then to listen to stories, not like now when my grandchildren come for very short visits and even then prefer to watch TV. This is my home; I remember these birds so well because I have spent so much time here with friends and family, most of whom have already died. The changing of this landscape is like the changes in my life. Seeing it again brings it to life again. I wish I could share some of it with my children and grandchildren".

Four month later, when Jonathan's autobiographical diary was completed, he invited his whole family for a journey to the valley. He brought each story to life in a specific location, surrounded and heard by the people he loved the most.

Three years later Jonathan died. His autobiographical book, his stories and the landscape remain.

Short discussion

This example not only illustrates the way in which NT can take place with an elderly person, it shows a unique way in which it can allow growth that might have not been allowed in other ways. It shows how the physical aspects of NT can be reduced, using neither physical activities nor rituals, replacing them instead with an intimate encounter with the landscape and using it to voice out personal stories and place them within the person's life journey.

A different way of using NT with old people, for example, with those living in an old age home, can be to invite them for short walks in nature near/outside the institution, to observe changes in nature. Then, continuing the work indoors, this observation can serve as the basis for a conversation or a creative activity about constancy/changes/cycles in their lives. In this respect, the metaphoric use of the framework, or, nature as a metaphor for life, can serve as a major medium.

Psychological limitations

The psychological limitations of the practice relate to two basic issues that stand at the framework's center:

1. Nature Therapy takes place outdoors, in nature, in a place that does not necessarily have human-made boundaries; which is open to the world's influences, not owned by the therapist and so on (Berger 2008). This choice of setting involves basic issues that influence the therapeutic contract and the therapeutic relationship. Inviting nature to take an active part in the process invites challenges that might not take place indoors and might be complex for some clients.
2. Nature Therapy takes place in experiential ways, placing the experience in the center. It uses direct, creative and embodied encounters with nature to help the clients re-visit their childlike parts; the spontaneous, the emotional

and the imaginary (right hemisphere of the brain), giving less space to the cognitive and adult parts (left hemisphere of the brain).

Relating to the two issues mentioned above, related to the setting and to experiential and regressive modes of work, it seems that Nature Therapy's practice might touch basic emotional and/or mental elements that might be real issues for some clients, overwhelm them and even cause anti-therapeutic experiences. It seems there is a potential for people with an extreme need for clear boundaries, hierarchy and a high level of control to be hurt by the overwhelming experiences in NT work. If this statement is taken at face value, it might exclude people with emotional and/or mental difficulties (psychological) from using it; people with psychiatric difficulties, in general, and those with anxieties, difficulties with reality-testing and/or PTSD, in particular.

It is clear that a therapist working with such populations can (and should) foresee the complexities of using NT with them and make the necessary adjustments for its successful implementation. Such adjustments can be seen in the second example of this section. Nevertheless, the real complexity relates to situations in which the therapist is not aware of the client's psychological condition and/or the different ways in which the environment can influence it. Such a case is presented in the coming example.

Nature can reactivate a trauma... an example from practice

Jessica, a fourteen-year-old girl took part in a year's Nature Therapy program at a school for children with late development, in the north of Israel. In addition to typical behaviors of a girl with mental retardation, Jessica also had some emotional and communication difficulties, which were expressed by outbursts of emotions: sudden laughter, shouting or crying. Thanks to the good relationship she had developed with the therapist and due to the enjoyment she gained from the non-verbal and playful manner of activities, Jessica had become a consistent program participant and an active group member. She felt safe and had learned to take an active part in the sessions.

Throughout this time, the therapist was not told of the PTSD she had developed during the first Lebanon war, nor about psychiatric testing she had received to examine her ability to judge reality. Although he realized she needed special

attention, he felt safe including her in all activities. Towards the end of the year, as a peak activity, the group was taken for a day's trip to Gamla, a nature reserve on the Golan Heights, an area surrounded by an army training zone. It was the first and only time they went for such a long encounter, so far away from the school. During the first three hours, Jessica participated in all the activities happily, and did not express any signs of anxiety. During the fourth hour, sudden sounds of shelling from the nearby army zone interrupted the relaxed atmosphere. Jessica got hysterical and started shouting and running all over the place, looking for shelter. From the symptoms she displayed, it was clear that the routine army drill had reactivated a post traumatic experience, which completely overwhelmed her. She ran to the edge of the Gamla cliffs, looking for refuge, endangering both herself and the therapist who had run after her, trying to stop her. After he managed to stop, calm her down and gather the group around, it became clear that Jessica was re-living her experience of hiding from shelling during the war. Using a behavioral strategy, with right-left body tapping while repeating the sentence (elements from EMDR): "these are not sounds of war but of an army training, the war has ended, you are safe" and surrounding her with a tightly knit group circle helped Jessica to relax and return to the group and to reality, the danger safely behind her ...

Short discussion

This example presents the way in which an unpredictable element in the NT workshop environment can reactivate a post-traumatic episode. More than the sounds of the bombing themselves, it is the unpredictability related to their effect on a person's experience that triggers the trauma. This example highlights a situation in which NT can actually be anti-therapeutic...

In Jessica's case, the therapist knowledge of EMDR and behavioral techniques helped him to calm down the client and perhaps even help her recover from a childhood trauma. However, this story could have ended differently...

To some extent, this example also highlights the limitations of the therapist's ability to 'know his/her clients' and to predict and/or control the environment. It shows his/her limitations in predicting the ways in which a client will react to certain environments and his/her need to be always on the alert...

***'The way out'... using NT with an adult suffering from shell shock and depression-
An example from practice***

Abraham, a forty-five year old man was hospitalized in the open psychiatric department at Ziv hospital, Israel; suffering from a combination of shell shock and depression. The first three sessions took place in Abraham's room, where I sat near his bed while he covered himself with a blanket (including the face) and talked about his fear of 'coming out'. As the symptoms decreased, with the help of drugs and the systematic treatment given at the hospital, Abraham was willing to encounter me without the blanket; sitting on his bed and talking. He was still preoccupied with 'the sounds of war' but was also able to talk about other aspects of his life and about his relationship with his son in particular. On one hand, this discourse made him happy, remembering his love for him. At the same time, it made him sad. "He is angry that I never go with him anywhere, I think he is even ashamed of me. What can I do? Every time I go out of our house, I'm afraid I'll have a flash back or a panic attack. So, I just let it go". In the next session, I suggested to Abraham that we go for a walk in the hospital garden. At first Abraham did not agree, but towards the end of the session he agreed to go out just for a moment and see the almond bloom. Reaching it, he said "isn't this tree beautiful, we have such a tree in our garden at home, I miss it". Three days later, at our next meeting, Abraham was waiting for me by the department's door with two chairs. "Can we meet under the tree" he asked. During that session we talked about the meaning that the almond tree had for him: memories associated with it and the symbolism he gave its cycles; its leaves falling and blooming. The war and the traumatic stories associated with it were not mentioned once. As it was raining in the next session, we didn't go out and held the encounter by the window overlooking the garden and the almond tree. "It is so close and yet so far away, like my relationship with my son. Can we go out and feel the rain?" he asked me...

A year later, just before the holiday of Tu Bishvat (a Jewish holiday that marks the coming of spring), I received an invitation from Abraham to join a tree-planting ceremony that he and his son were about to lead at his son's school. "You know", he wrote, "some times the way out is actually the journey in..."

Short discussion

This example presents the way in which chosen elements from NT can be incorporated into verbal therapy with clients suffering from extreme psychological difficulties. It highlights a way in which the encounter with nature can broaden a client's perspective and help him/her make a real turning point.

Working within the discipline's limitations - closure and discussion

This sub-Chapter aimed at presenting some of the limitations of the seedling Nature Therapy practices. Relating to physical and psychological aspects of the work, it highlighted populations for which it might be less suitable and situations in which it might even have an anti-therapeutic influence. The sub-Chapter included examples of how the framework can be used with such populations, demonstrating ways in which a sensitive and creative facilitation style can adapt it to their special characteristics and needs. It highlighted the option of using only certain elements of the framework and combining it with other therapeutic approaches. Widening the options of using the framework, while highlighting the ways it focuses on the strength and health of the client, it challenged the limitations presented earlier and the assumption that it might be inappropriate to populations with extreme physical and/or psychological difficulty. Concluding this sub-Chapter, I would like to highlight several issues, or perhaps questions that this sub-Chapter has raised:

1. **Are we doing Nature Therapy or incorporating it into other practices:** most of the examples that this sub-Chapter included used only a few elements from NT. In fact, it seems that it was this reduction that made it suit the populations it worked with. Were these cases of real NT or should such work be regarded as an incorporation of elements of NT into other approaches? What are the borders between disciplines and to what extent and in what cases do they matter?
2. **Can only a therapist with a wide, interdisciplinary background do this?** In most of the examples presented earlier, the therapist combined elements from several therapeutic approaches. This integration seems to have made the adaptation successful. Does this mean that only therapists with a wide therapeutic background can create these adaptations and work

with such populations? What are the implications for NT training programs and supervision?

3. **Is it time to develop an ethical code?** Relating to the practice's limitations and situations in which it can be anti-therapeutic and/or harm clients, is it time to develop an ethical code and a standard for the professionals who work in this developing practice?

Like the entire Ph.D. it seems that this sub-Chapter provided few answers and opened up many more questions... I hope they will be answered by additional people who will join the field's further development and establishment.

7.2.4.8 The concept of "Nature" within Nature Therapy

Relating to theme number five in chapter 2.3 and to linguistic and philosophical issues mentioned there, this Ph.D. offers the following answers:

In reference to the first question: "What is the meaning of the word (nature) as it is used in the phrase Nature Therapy?" The framework that this Ph.D. has developed and offers relates to the word "nature" similarly to the first definition given by the Oxford Concise Dictionary: "The physical world, including plants, animals, the landscape, and natural phenomena, as opposed to humans or human creations" (page 62). This practical way of addressing nature has been illustrated throughout the Ph.D. and matches its practical orientation.

The second question asked: "What kind of nature and how much nature is needed for the practice of Nature Therapy? In answer, this Ph.D. has presented a wide variety of natural environments in which Nature Therapy took place: from the garden of an urban city school to the wilderness of the desert, thus broadening the defined scope of relevant natural setting. It would seem that NT can take place in any kind natural environment, as long as the relationship with the setting is maintained as a central reference to the process and to its conduction.

As for the third question: "What is the difference between therapy-in-nature (normal therapeutic practices and processes in a natural context), Adventure Therapy and Wilderness Therapy and Nature Therapy?" Nature Therapy, as it has been developed and conceptualized in this Ph.D. offers a fresh, specific framework for the conduct of "therapy in nature". The specified theory, concepts and methods that it includes, distinguish it from other forms of "therapy in nature". Some of the

deference's between Adventure Therapy and NT have been detailed in chapter 7.3.3, while others can be found throughout the Ph.D. This question is thus answered by the entire Ph.D. in general, and its theoretical parts, in particular.

7.3 Ways in Which the Ph.D. Added to the Existing Body of Knowledge

This sub-Chapter aims to present ways in which the knowledge generated in the current Ph.D., - theory, concepts and methods - can contribute to the knowledge of the main disciplines that were used in its articulation: Ecopsychology, Adventure Therapy and Drama Therapy.

7.3.1 Discussion of the Contribution of the Ph.D. to the Field of Ecopsychology

Ecopsychology is a philosophy concerning the relationship and interconnectedness that humans and nature share, highlighting its application to personal and social processes. It calls upon people to reconnect with nature, claiming that the establishment of this relationship is essential for people's well-being and for nature's preservation and conservation (Chapter 2.2). According to the review presented in Chapters 2.2, 2.3, it seems that more and more therapists around the world are incorporating Ecopsychological ideas into their practices. They use it in order to expand the classical anthropocentric, therapeutic standpoint to include questions about the client's relationship with nature. Nevertheless, relating to the review in Chapters 2.2 and 2.3, which examined it in a therapeutic context, some basic issues have not as yet been clearly developed or conceptualized, for example:

1. Is it a new and independent ecological form of therapy, or is it a set of ideas that accompany other, existing approaches? Does it have a 'real' framework, code of ethics and protocols or is it more a philosophy and set of ideas? What is actually being done during the sessions and what methods are used? On what other psychological frameworks does such therapy depend and what does it include?
2. Where do Ecopsychologically-oriented sessions take place – indoors or outdoors? What are the theoretical and practical applications of each

choice? Does the work need to include a direct and experiential contact with nature or can it take place only indoors?

3. What and who is the center of the work? Is the main aim to reconnect the person with nature or is this aspect only one part of this form?
4. Target populations: What are the target populations? With what client groups could it be practiced? Does it suit everyone? Does it address only people with 'an ecological perspective'?

Relating to these questions, it can be argued that this Ph.D. contributes to the field of Ecopsychology in the following ways:

- a. It develops an Eco-psycho-social theory, perhaps philosophy that underpins and justifies the incorporation of nature into therapy and into the framework that the Ph.D. articulates and presents. Exploring specific aspects of the evolution of the relationship between people and nature, this theory, presented in Chapters 2.2.5 and 2.2.6, illustrates some of the correlations that exist between the process of distancing from nature and the distancing from religion, community and traditional healing. Highlighting ways in which these processes may have caused some of the psychological and social misfortunes of our times, it highlights some of the contributions that the incorporation of nature into therapy may have on therapeutic, social and ecological process. Doing so, this theory illustrates the potential that this incorporation may have in helping people expand their spiritual connections with themselves, with others and with the cosmos. The framework which this Ph.D. has developed (see Chapters 2.3 and 6 and Appendixes 2.1, 2.2, 2.5 and 2.6) is based on this theory, while the research it includes presents its possible operation and impact on practice (see Chapters 5 and 6 and Appendixes 2.2, 2.4).
- b. It develops a framework that includes nature as a key factor in the process of therapy. It includes theory, concepts and intervention methods that can help the practitioner relate to different elements within the process and include them in the diagnostic process and in the choice of interventions (see Chapters 2.3 and 6 and Appendixes 3-2-3.6).

- c. The framework which the Ph.D. presents offers a wide range of intervention methods that may suit a wide range of clients and populations, including those with special needs and/or low cognitive abilities (see Chapter 2.3 and Appendices 3.2 and 3.5). The implementations of these creative and non-verbal techniques in practice and their impact upon clients are presented in the case studies that the Ph.D. includes (see Chapter 5 and Appendices 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4).
- d. Who is at the centre – humans or nature? Relating to the criticism that exists in Deep-Ecology and Ecopsychology about the issue of anthropocentrism in psychotherapy (Chapter 2.2) and the question of whether Ecopsychology is a 'real' therapy, it seems that it is important to state the contribution and standpoint of the framework that this Ph.D. developed within this larger discourse. Acknowledging the anthropocentric and individualistic characteristics of the post-modern culture into which Nature Therapy emerged, it places the personal benefits of clients in the centre of the process (rather than saving the planet). It respects people's individualistic orientations, including their sense of separation from each other and the world around. Nature Therapy's orientation is to help individuals develop as separate beings, while expanding their ability to connect and feel part of others (in this sense nature is another 'other'). This can be done in a direct way, talking or doing things that connect to this issue (Appendix 3.2) or indirectly, by using experiential and creative work that connects people and nature (Chapter 2.3, 5 and 6 and Appendixes 3.2, 3.4, 3.5). Based upon the ideas and data presented in Chapter 2.1 and Chapter 5, the main assumption that this Ph.D. states is that when people feel they have personally gained something good from nature, or when they have formed an intimate relationship with it, they will also care for it and nourish it. Resulting from this attitude, a Nature Therapy session does not need to include talking about the relationship with nature; rather it forms direct, bodily and emotional contact with it. This perspective clarifies Nature Therapy's connection to the psychotherapeutic melee, working from within its anthropocentric perspective, while seeking to expand it to a more systemic one; one that includes nature.

It is important to say that this basic assumption (which may have important applications to educational fields such as environmental education) has not been researched in this current study, and needs further exploration.

Relating to the issues presented above, this Ph.D. can also be addressed as an Ecopsychological framework, adding theoretical concepts and intervention methods to this eco-socio-psychological philosophy. This perspective also relates to feedback and comments that this work has received from academics around the world (Appendices 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)

7.3.2 Discussion of the Contribution of the Ph.D. to the Field of Adventure Therapy

Relating to the literature review in Chapter 3, it seems that one can relate to Adventure Therapy as a concrete, task-oriented, therapeutic-educational approach taking place in nature. But, although it takes place in nature, nature's role in it and nature's intrinsic value has received little attention. The approach relates to nature as (merely) a setting and backdrop, a place that offers challenges and materials that suit its 'problem-solving' orientation. This attitude towards nature overlooks some of the therapeutic aspects that the relationship between people and nature contains; a standpoint that has been criticized by writers such as Beringer and Martin (2003). Furthermore, it can be argued that this attitude towards nature, using it as a tool-provider, while addressing it as an obstacle that needs overcoming, can contribute to people's alienation from nature, contrary to the re-connection process that Ecopsychology aims to achieve.

Another issue, that the literature review highlights, is the lack of sufficient Adventure Therapy frameworks, concepts and methods that the practitioner can relate to and depend upon (Chapter 3). It relates to questions such as:

1. What process and perspective are used by the Adventure therapist in order to explore and examine the work? Does the relationship with nature have a part in this observation?

2. What is nature's role in this form of therapy and in what ways (in case it has a role) does it influence the process? What impact does this standpoint have upon the therapist's choice of setting, choice of methods and interventions, relation with nature and relationship with the client? Does it affect the practitioner's code of ethics?
3. What other, non-concrete and non-challenge-orientated methods can be incorporated into this task-oriented approach, and to what additional perspectives can it be expanded?

Relating to the issue of target population, it seems that Adventure Therapy works mainly with people who have a normal I.Q, and normal physicality (non handicapped, non-old...). It is exercised mainly with youth and adults who find difficulties dealing with borders and authority, or have difficulties relating to their low self-esteem. The limitations may be related to several issues:

- Adventure Therapy's concrete orientation, with most of the processing work done cognitively, using words as the main media; an element which can be difficult and thus limit the participation of people with mental disabilities and/or late development.
- Most of Adventure Therapy's methods work through physical challenge, an element which can be difficult and limit the participation of populations such as the elderly and people with handicaps.

Another reason for such limitations might be caused by Adventure Therapy's systemic choice of setting, working mainly in remote locations for short and intensive periods. This choice may not suit some parts of the population and/or health and welfare organizations located in cities, who would like/need to maintain their systemic way of working. In this sense, a dramatic change of environment (and staff) could prove 'too much' for some kinds of populations (mental health, PTSD, autistic etc.).

Exploring Adventure Therapy's research shows that it limits itself to working on issues such as boundaries, self-confidence, self-esteem and authority and less on behavioral issues such as grief, trauma, aging and others outside its regular context. It seems that the development of softer and more creative modes of work can expand not only the population it works with, but also the issues it can deal with.

Elements that the Ph.D. contributes to Adventure Therapy's existing knowledge:

Generally speaking it seems that the framework that this Ph.D. has developed can be addressed as a creative and Ecopsychological development of the existing Adventure Therapy framework. Exploring this option in more detail, it seems this Ph.D. offers Adventure Therapy the following areas for articulation:

1. A theory and concepts that relate to nature's role and influence upon the process. Nature Therapy's framework can help the Adventure therapist make decisions relating to the choice of setting (Appendices 3.5 and 3.6) the therapeutic relationship (between client-therapist and nature), and the choice of methods and intervention (Chapter 2.3) The methods and concepts that this Ph.D. thesis includes can also help bridge the gaps that may exist between the experience in nature and the person's/group home environment.
2. A theory and methods that can help to develop the connection between clients and nature. In this respect, Nature Therapy offers a way to include the Ecopsychology concept of 'the ecological self' in Adventure Therapy practice, offering a pathway to expand the personal anthropocentric perspective, while adding to the learning made through the dialogue with the 'larger than self'.
3. The Ph.D. thesis offers methods and concepts that can help Adventure Therapy expand the populations with which it works. It develops a gentler way to do outdoors therapy, which does not focus on the issue of challenge but rather on the narratives which are told and are reconstructed through the direct and creative encounter with nature. It emphasises the role of 'metaphors' and the importance of the bodily and creative process, while working between the spaces: the concrete and the imaginative, the home environment and nature. The incorporation of these concepts into Adventure Therapy practice can help to extend its use to populations who

have difficulty with its problem-solving orientation and the use of verbal and cognitive communication channels. The Ph.D. thesis includes several case studies that show ways in which such work took place with children with late development and with elderly people (Chapter 5, Appendices 3.3 and 3.4).

4. The work and research that are presented in this Ph.D. offer a fresh system in which nature-orientated therapeutic work can take place in a school setting. It offers a way in which it can be done by weekly sessions in nearby nature, facilitated by the school/hospital staff after they have taken part in relevant training. This framework can extend the common, remote, outdoor areas in which most Adventure Therapy work takes place and expand possibilities to include working in an urban (or semi-urban) environment. It can also be used to include staff from the home institutions in the process, making them partners, while teaching them important elements that this mode of work includes. Working with this concept can help bridge the gap that may exist between the experience in nature and every day life at the institution.
5. As the integrative framework that this Ph.D. presents focuses more on the 'being' parts of the journey in nature and less on the 'doing' parts, it allows the work to enter additional (perhaps deeper), non-behavioural issues. It makes room for working on elements such as grief and loss, coping with trauma, transitions from one life phase to another and spiritual issues including questions about meaning and purpose in life. The narrative orientation of this framework and the way it integrates concepts from other existing theories can be incorporated into Adventure Therapy helping it to expand its common 'behavioural' orientation.

7.3.3 Discussion of the Contribution of the Ph.D. to the Field of Drama Therapy

In keeping with the Drama therapy review that this work presents throughout Chapters 2.3, 3 and 6, it seems that one can relate to Drama Therapy as a creative form of therapy that uses theatre structures, drama and art processes as its main reference. This multi-modal art form is implemented in an indoors settings, for different kinds of populations working on varied issues.

Relating to this statement, it seems that the framework that this Ph.D. has developed can be regarded as an outdoors extension of Drama Therapy, suggesting ways to incorporate nature, while expanding the dialogue with the 'larger than self'. The major Drama Therapy concepts can be expanded by the knowledge that has been generated in this thesis: the concept of rituals and the concepts of 'distancing' and 'the as if reality'.

The Ph.D. makes a significant contribution to the concept of rituals. The concept of rituals is a key principle in Drama Therapy (Chapter 2.3 and Chapter 3). Some of the field's pioneers related to rituals as the ancestors of Drama Therapy, while others even relate to the Drama therapist as a new form of the tribal Shaman (Grainger, 1995; Jennings, 1992, 1995b, 1998; Landy, 1993). Although some writers object to this, saying it overlooks the complexity of rituals and the cultural context in which they took place (Jones, 1996), it seems they all agree that the concept of rituals and its various uses within Drama Therapy is one of its key principles.

Exploring Drama Therapy literature, it seems that several aspects of the way in which it incorporates rituals are strongly connected with issues that this thesis has developed. This connection relates to the way in which Drama Therapy's intentional use of ritual makes a metaphysical and physical statement about illness and health; emphasising the interplay between various aspects of the human personality (Jennings, 1995b, 1998). In addition, it seeks to imply a belief in universal forms helping people to assert their own sense of control (Landy, 1993). Grainger (1995) relates to these issues, highlighting ways in which the form's use of rituals can help people connect and develop their spiritual sides, saying that this is an important aspect of this creative form.

Relating to this review, it seems that the knowledge generated in this Ph.D. can expand the way in which Drama Therapy relates to rituals, as it offers a framework that can support its operation in nature. (Chapter 2.3, 5 and 6 and Appendices 3.2, 3.3, 3.5). The concept of *Incorporating nature in the creation of rituals*, (Chapter 2.3 and 7.2) includes methods and concepts that can connect the person with the universe and the cycles of nature, helping him/her expand his/her sense of control and meaning in life. Working with the concept of *Touching nature* by direct and sensory encounters with nature (Chapter 2.3) and the concept of *Art within nature*, incorporating the metaphors and archetypes that this encounter can have in the ritualistic process (Chapter 2.3, 6 and Appendices 3.4 and 3.5) can help the person expand his/her metaphysical and spiritual abilities, while developing his/her connection with the 'larger than self'. This can also place the mind-body-spirit process in the context of modern therapy and widen its discourse to additional directions.

Another valuable aspect of the present study is the new perspective it provides concerning the concepts of the fantastic reality and the sacred. The Ph.D. also makes a contribution to the concept of distancing and the 'as if' reality. The concept of 'distancing' and the concept of the 'as if reality' are basic Drama Therapy principles. Their potential lies in the way they invite participants to enter a different and separated space, manifested by the theatre stage, giving them a chance to experience situations, roles and interactions which they might find hard to cope with or take into their everyday lives. This process invites the client on a journey away from the everyday environment to the theatre stage (and back), and from concrete reality to the realms of fantasy (the 'as if'). Lahad, another Drama Therapy pioneer and the founder of the BASICPH model, claims that this journey is one of the approach's main therapeutic powers (Lahad, 2002).

The concepts of *Working in the intermediate zone* and the concept of *Therapy as a journey* (Chapter 2.3, 6) takes this idea further, connecting it with the idea of the hero's journey manifesting through a (real) journey in nature. In order to set off for this (real) journey, the client needs to make active (real and concrete) choices and implement them in the real world. S/he must make his/her way towards a distant, 'as if reality', the one waiting for him/her in the workshop. As such, the client needs to get ready for the journey, prepare his/her bag, say goodbye to the people he leaves at

home, make arrangements for the time he will be away, drive to the workshop's location, adjust to the new environment, and then, once its over, make the journey back... meet the people s/he left behind, unpack his/her bag and check out how and where to put the things s/he has brought back with him/her... This concrete process can not only help people make the transition into the 'as if reality' but also and perhaps even more importantly, make the journey back. Examples of the ways in which these ideas are implemented in practice can be found in Chapter 6 and in Appendix 3.5.

The *Building a home in nature* method (Chapter 2.3, 5, Appendix 3.5) is based on the idea that nature, being an environment which is qualitatively different than most people's everyday environment, can help people explore their 'real' reality. It uses the concept of distancing in a concrete way, inviting people to build a home in nature; using this building and later maintenance process to explore the (real) home they live in. Examples of ways in which these ideas are implemented can be found in Chapters 5, 6 and Appendices 2, 5.

The contribution of this Ph.D. to Drama Therapy theory and practice can also be seen in the comments I received from Professor M. Lahad, one of the pioneers in this field (Appendix 2.2). Relating to these comments that the thesis received from Lahad (Appendix 3.2) it seems that the framework that this thesis developed can also be addressed as an outdoors model of Drama Therapy.

In conclusion to Section 7.3 as a whole, it seems that the framework that this thesis has developed can be addressed as a specific modification of each of the three fields that it comprises: Ecopsychology, Adventure Therapy and Drama Therapy. It adds different elements to each of them, developing them with its Nature Therapy orientation. A different perspective, one that relates to the way in which new and integrative theories are constructed (Chapter 1) can also relate to this thesis as an innovative and independent integrative framework, one that takes place in creative ways in nature, while addressing nature as a partner in the process.

7.4 Future Applications for Theory, Practice and Research

Towards the conclusion of this Ph.D., this section aims to highlight possible applications of the work for theory, practice and research.

7.4.1 Future Developments for Theory

The main contribution of this Ph.D. is the framework, theory, concepts and methods it has developed and presents. It invites practitioners from different fields to use Nature Therapy and incorporate it into their practice. This incorporation can be in a direct way – using it in nature-oriented therapy, or using elements from it to expand indoor modes of work. The framework (and elements) can be also used in parallel disciplines such as: Education, environmental education, experiential learning and experiential education, ecology, human ecology, and perhaps even in some aspects of the fields of anthropology, sociology and geography.

There are some significant ways in which the Nature Therapy theory can be further developed. The framework that this work generates evolves from a number of approaches and it can be interesting to develop and explore the links it has with other therapeutic approaches such as Gestalt, the narrative approach, transpersonal psychology etc.

7.4.2 Future Developments for Practice

This contribution includes:

- a. Development of different therapeutic programs operating with varied populations, answering different needs and aims and taking place in different settings. The experience and knowledge generated in the programmes can be used to develop additional programmes working with more clients and environments.
- b. Developing training programmes. These programmes include a range of courses taking place in academic and non-academic institutions, answering different needs and taking place in different settings. During the Ph.D. process, three long, post-graduate trainings were developed and operated at several academic institutions in Israel and many other short trainings were

delivered in Israel and Europe (see Chapter 4.2). The experience and knowledge that was generated in those operations can be used in the development of more programmes throughout the world. This can include the formation of a longer Nature Therapy MA training or the incorporation of Nature Therapy units within trainings in other approaches and disciplines.

- c. Developing Nature Therapy-oriented supervision. During the Ph.D. process and the operation of programmes in the field, a Nature Therapy-oriented mode of supervision was formed, practiced and explored (see Chapter 4.2). Although the written parts of this Ph.D. do not include the details, it seems that it has important implications for the field's further professional development. In addition, it seems that this creative and nature operated form of supervision can also contribute to the larger field of therapeutic supervision. This issue will receive its own space and will be published in details elsewhere at a later stage.
- d. Developing a professional community. During the Ph.D. process, as part of its Action Research strategy, a professional community was formed. Gatherings and conferences were held and a unified association has begun to develop (see Chapter 4.2). These developments can provide practical knowledge to practitioners and researchers, as well as a network to further develop the field and perhaps also parallel fields.

Elements from the practice of Nature Therapy that can be further developed include developing the current practice, doing more of it and at the same time exploring its operation and impact on additional populations, in different settings and different cultural and natural contexts. It also requires the formation of an international community, one that will develop and share the knowledge and answer questions such as what should be done next And how should it be done?.

7.4.3 Future Applications for Research

1. Considering the claim that a positive relationship with nature is an essential part of people's well-being and positive health, it seems that the knowledge that this thesis articulated can also implement research and policy-making in fields such as environmental science, sustainability, nature conservation, general health and welfare, education, economics and politics.
2. Developing a research framework that will support further theory construction. Using the framework of Action Research, the concept of reflexivity and the use of Grounded Theory, this Ph.D. offers a research framework, perhaps a method, that can be implemented in future research seeking to construct and develop therapeutic theories, in particular, and social theories in general.
3. This Ph.D. has also developed and presented a methodology and research strategy that was used in the articulation of a new and integrative therapeutic framework (Chapter 4). It has explored different elements of its use with different clients and in different settings. It seems that the way it combined an Action Research strategy, a reflexive standpoint and Grounded Theory Analysis can be used in parallel research, using this combination to explore the impact that different theoretic aspects have upon different processes, with different clients and in different settings. This use may contribute to further theory construction and to the examination of programme efficacy.

7.5 Validity and Methodological Issues

Concluding the discussion, this unit will address the methodological issues of this research. It will present elements that support the research validity and trustworthiness, continue with a list of things that were learnt throughout the process and conclude with recommendations which can improve further research.

7.5.1 Research Validity and Trustworthiness

Aiming to explore research quality, validity and credibility, I went back to the quality control guidelines that were presented in Chapter 4. I examined the research procedures, conduct and writing in correlation with these guidelines. The details of this process are presented herewith.

Explicit scientific context and purpose: The scientific context of the research was made throughout the study placing it within its larger context: the fields of Ecopsychology, Adventure Therapy and Drama Therapy. This was done mainly in Chapter 1, Chapter 2.2 and in Chapter 3.

Appropriate methods: Relating to the purpose of the study and the context in which it was held, it seems that appropriate methods were used. Aiming to generate a theory from participants' experiences and to create programmes based on this innovative theory, an Action Research strategy was chosen as the core of the research. Looking for an appropriate way to generate this theory, Grounded Theory analysis technique was chosen, using the participants' voices as the basis for its construction. Relating to the researcher's involvement and to his/her background, a reflexive standpoint was taken, aiming to make these transparent to readers and allow them to extricate their own meaning from research findings. Full description of this process can be found in Chapter 4.

Respect of participants: Participants were notified about the research aims, procedures and conduct prior to their participation. All participants agreed to the research procedures and gave their consent to take part in it. Confidentiality was kept, except in cases in which participants asked for their names and details to be kept and published. Coming from a perspective that wishes to empower participant, this seemed the right standpoint to apply. A full description of this process can be found in Chapter 10.1 (Appendix)

Specification of methods: The research procedures and the way in which it was conducted were specified. Detailing the methods of data collection and analysis aimed

at helping readers understand and judge this process, as well as to see how to conduct a similar study themselves.

Appropriate discussion: The discussions made throughout the work, especially in Chapters 5 and 6 (Case studies) used terms that are relevant to theory, method and practice.

Clarity of presentation and contribution to knowledge: The manuscript is written clearly, well organized and with technical terms defined. It contributes to an elaboration of the discipline's body of description and understanding. This can be seen mainly in Chapters 2.3, 5 and 6 and in the Appendices 3.1-3.6.

Transparency: Due to the researcher's involvement in the research and his previous background in the issue it studied, a reflexive standpoint was kept throughout the research and in Chapters 2.3, and 6, and in Appendix 3.6 in particular. This sharing of theoretical orientations, personal anticipations, values, pre-assumptions, interests and role within the research, aim to highlight ways in which the researcher might have influenced the research process and its outcomes. It also aims to allow readers to interpret and judge the process and its findings, while encouraging them to consider possible alternatives to the researcher's interpretations and presented outcomes.

Situating the sample: Data about research participants was given. The details, which included their ages, life circumstances and training, aimed to help readers judge the typicality of the data and make their own sense of it. The specifications also helped clarify the typicality of the research and its outcomes.

Grounding the theory in examples: The theory that the research developed and presented was grounded in examples. This way of presenting the framework aimed at illustrating the analytical procedure and showing the separation between the participants' experiences and the researcher's interpretation. Its intention was to help readers judge as they see fit and make their own meaning and understanding. This

way of grounding the theory in examples also helps readers to understand the uniqueness of the study and avoid generalizing its conclusions.

Providing credibility checks: Re-checks and feedback of the analysis, the divisions into categories and writing were made by research participants, colleagues, and supervisors. This process aimed to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

Coherence: The study was written in a way that formed a data-based story/narrative. This coherent presentation aimed to help readers make meaning from the work as well making it clear to the reader.

7.5.2 Things I Have Learned

When I started this Ph.D., I knew nothing about doing research. Now, towards its end, I can say that I know something...Using a qualitative approach, I have learned about the potential of the word, not only to understand and give meaning to phenomena, but, furthermore to construct 'reality'.

Working within an Action Research strategy, I have learned the potential that lies in the dialogues and combinations between theory and practice, academics and fieldwork, researcher and practitioners. Doing so, I realized the potential (and responsibility) that research can have upon the 'real world', helping to create social-political-environmental changes.

Using Grounded Theory analysis taught me to listen more carefully to people's voices while exploring the (sub) meanings they give things. Doing so, I have learned about the potential of systemic and repetitive listening not only for constructing theory but also for doing better therapy.

Integrating a reflexive standpoint made me aware of my role and the influence of including my subjectivity and pre-assumptions. It also taught me about the ways I am influenced by doing research and ways in which I can use my personal voice for the benefits of teaching, doing therapy and writing research.

Concluding this journey I feel there is so much more to learn, yet it seems I have learned how to use a compass...

7.5.3 Recommendations for Improving the Research

Concluding this research it seems that there are several elements that could have improved the current research and additional elements that can support its further development:

Elements that could have improved the current research (or, things that I would have done otherwise):

1. Expand data collection: give the participants detailed, open ended questionnaires before the training (and not only at their end).
2. Articulate a better axis to highlight the way in which the Action cycles informed the construction and development of the theory. This way will incorporate the linear and spiral process in a format that unites them (rather than separates them).
3. Collaborate with other researchers in all research phases: data collection, analysis, writing the report and publishing. This would have probably expanded the research perspective and outcomes, support its credibility and prevent the loneliness entailed in the process.
4. Translate the work to Hebrew (especially the case studies). This could probably help me get more participants to comment on the work and in more details.
5. Get funding: this would support the whole process. Both on the personal level, allowing me to be more available to doing it (with less financial worries) and both on the professional level, as it would enable me to widen the sample, incorporate other research, and expand the methods used.
6. Expand the supervisory team in a way that will support and widen the research environmental and ecological aspects.

Recommendations for further research:

- a. Incorporate quantitative methods: in order to explore the framework's impact in more depth, on more populations, in light of different aims and in different settings, it is recommended to expand the qualitative methods that were used in this study into additional quantitative approaches. This development will need additional funding, writing additional research proposals, more clients and more of a research team.
- b. Expand the research to other domains: in order to explore the framework's impact on additional domains, it is recommended to widen it not only into additional therapeutic research, studying its impact on other populations but also to other fields: Ecology, Nature conservation, Education, Finance and Politics.
- c. Expand the literature review: relating to the previous section, it is recommended to widen the literature review and to explore the impact that nature has upon people also from the perspectives of other disciplines. This can help to create a much broader and interdisciplinary picture of the field.
- d. Form international collaborations: this can help include a multi-cultural perspective on the field. An international conference can be set as a benchmark for such a development.

CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUDING THE JOURNEY

As I began writing this Chapter, I felt as if I was standing on a bridge connecting the past, the present and the future. It is exciting to look upon the journey, the experiences it has invited me to go through and its outcome. The academic journey began five years ago when I was a young single man and is ending when I am married and the father of two.

A few weeks ago, Alon, my four year old son asked me where I learned to be a father. Becoming a father was a complex transition for me, and now I feel not only like the parent of my children, but also the father of the Nature Therapy approach and the people I have trained who are working with this tool and developing it. Like fatherhood, it includes many different kinds of feelings, from love and excitement to sadness and exhaustion.

The PhD was a maturation ritual... Friends advise me to take some time off, and not a short one...

Finishing the Ph.D. thesis highlights so many things that need to be done. Should I pack my bags and go across the ocean to teach and develop Nature Therapy? Should I stay in Israel, go on with what I am doing, write a book and establish a Nature Therapy-oriented school, one that will include an experiential kindergarten, school, college and therapeutic centre, perhaps even a small settlement? My mother used to tell me that I would end up being an anthropologist, perhaps this is the case?

In the past I used to change my profession after I reached a climax in each of them; moving from nature conservation to dance, to Drama Therapy and to Nature Therapy. It somehow feels like Nature Therapy integrates all my past occupations; therefore it seems I can stay here, dwell on and in it; allow myself to expand rather than to break away.

It feels wonderful to observe what I have accomplished: the development of a framework and a practice; the development of programmes and trainings; research and publishing. At the same time, I ask myself: is this really what I wanted? Was this my destiny?

Perhaps it has all just been part of the process; the journey of an artistic and humanistic nature conservationist, who fears for the future of his children on a planet that is in a constant process of losing its nature.

Standing on the bridge I wonder, what is it that my soul truly seeks?

Ronen Berger

CHAPTER 9 – REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 -RESEARCH PROCEDURES – RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

1.1 Information sheet: 'Encounters in Nature' Case Study 1

Dear participant,

Thank you for your willingness to consider taking part in a research study based on the Encounters in Nature programme. The aim of the research is to explore your experience as a facilitator in this programme, with the goal of learning more about the issues involved in applying Nature Therapy methods in different settings, and with different client groups, thus widening its theory.

As part of the procedure which will be taken before the actual research begins, in order to make sure it conforms to ethical standards, I would like to ask you to read the attached information sheet before taking your decision about whether to take part in the research or not. It is important that you understand the aims, procedures and outcomes before giving the researcher your answer. Feel free to ask the researcher about any issue that is not clear to you or if you would like to have more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part in this research. Your work in the Encounter in Nature Programme does not depend on whether you take part in the research or not. Participation in the research is voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any time. Once you have read, understood and considered the option of taking part in the research, if you agree to take part in it, I would appreciate it if you would sign the attached consent form and return it to the address given below.

Many thanks,

Ronen Berger

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1. Research context

The research is part of a Ph.D. entitled Nature Therapy by Ronen Berger, which is supervised by Professor McLeod from the University Abertay of Dundee, Scotland.

2. Research aim

To explore the experience and understanding of therapists and teachers who have facilitated Nature Therapy programmes.

3. Procedures – what are you being asked to do?

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to:

- (A) Complete questionnaires after the summer training (before the Nature Therapy programme that you deliver), and after the end of the programme.
- (B) Participate in a three-hour interview on your experience as a facilitator, after the end of the programme.
- (C) Read and provide comments on a draft report

At the end of the research study, if you are interested in learning about the results of the research I will send you a copy of the final report.

4. Confidentiality

Any information that you provide will be treated in confidence and used only for research purposes. The research data will only be seen by the researcher and supervisor, and will be stored securely. Individuals will not be identifiable in any research reports.

This research is based on analysis of your experience as a facilitator. During the interviews, you will be asked not to provide any information that would allow the identification of individual participants in the Nature Therapy programme that you facilitated.

All research data will be destroyed on completion of the study.

5. Publications

The results of this study will be published in Ronen Berger's Ph.D. thesis, and as articles in academic journals or conference presentations. Copies of publications can be requested, without charge, from the researcher. Research participants will not be identified in any report or publication unless they have asked or have specifically consented to release such information.

In case you would like your name to be included in the report, please ask it specifically and confirm it by writing this request on this form.

6. Research organization and funding

The research is organized and funded by the researcher.

7. In case of a problem

If you have a concern about any aspect of the research, please feel free to speak with the researcher about it. If you still remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting Prof. McLeod, the research supervisor (e-mail: [REDACTED] at University of Abertay Dundee.

8. Withdrawal from the research

Participation in the research is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time.

I, _____ have read the information sheet and found it clear and understandable. Having read it, I can say that I am willing to take part in the research.

Name

Signature

Date: 1.7.2003

Signature of researcher:

Date:

(Research participant to retain a copy)

1.2 Information sheet: 'Between the Circle and the Cycle' Case Study 2

Thank you for your willingness to consider taking part in a research study in the Nature Therapy training programme. The aim of the research is to explore your experience as a participant in this training, with the goal of learning about issues involved in applying Nature Therapy with groups and further constructing its theory.

As part of the procedure which will be taken before the actual research begins, in order to make sure it conforms to ethical standards, I would like to ask you to read the attached information sheet before making your decision whether to take part in the research or not. It is important that you understand the aims, procedures and outcomes before giving the researcher your answer. Feel free to ask the researcher about any issue that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part in the research. Your participation in the training does not depend on whether you take part in the research or not. The participation in the research is voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any time. Once you have read, understood and considered the option of taking part in the research, if you agree to take part I would appreciate it if you could sign the attached consent form and return it to the address given below.

Many thanks,

Ronen Berger



1. Research Context

The research is part of a Ph.D. entitled Nature Therapy by Ronen Berger, which is supervised by Professor McLeod at the University Abertay of Dundee, Scotland.

2. Research aim

To explore the experience and understanding of participants in the Nature Therapy training programme

3. Procedures – what are you being asked to do?

If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to:

- (A) Complete a questionnaire after the training.
- (B) Participate in an interview, based on the issues raised in the questionnaire. The interview will be recorded.

At the end of the research study, if you are interested in learning about the results of the research I will send you a copy of the final report.

4. Confidentiality

Any information that you provide will be treated in confidence and used only for research purposes. The research data will only be seen by the researcher and supervisor, and will be stored securely. Individuals will not be identifiable in any research reports.

All research data will be destroyed on completion of the study.

5. Publications

The results of this study will be published in Ronen Berger's Ph.D. thesis, and as articles in academic journals or conference presentations. Copies of publications can be requested, without charge, from the researcher. Research participants will not be identified in any report or publication unless they have asked or have specifically consented to release such information.

In case you would like your name to be included in the report, please ask it specifically and confirm it by writing this request on this form.

6. Research organization and funding

The research is organized and funded by the researcher.

7. In case of a problem

If you have a concern about any aspect of the study, please feel free to speak with the researcher about it. If you still remain unhappy and wish to complain

formally, you can do this by contacting Prof McLeod, the research supervisor (e-mail: [REDACTED]) at University of Abertay Dundee.

8. Withdrawal from the study

Participation in the research is voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time.

I, _____ have read the information sheet and found it clear and understandable. After reading it I can say that I am willing to take part in the research.

I do / don't want my name (real name) to be used in the report.

Name

signature

Date: 1.7.2003

Signature of researcher:

Date:

(Research participant to retain a copy)

1.3 Questionnaires: Case Study 1

1.3.1 'Encounters with Nature' - Questionnaire given at the end of the training (July 2003)

Overall questions:

- (1) Name of the school:
- (2) Your name:
- (3) Your profession and qualification:
- (4) Your age:
- (5) Has the way you address the natural environment as a space to conduct educational – therapeutic work changed during the training? Yes/no, in what ways?
- (6) Are there any specific issues that you think the training should have included and did not?
- (7) Did you feel there was a good balance between the theoretical and practical (experiential) part?
- (8) In perspective, scale the amount of the previous knowledge you had before the training on the flowing elements:

Issue	1 completely new, never heard of it before	2 heard of it but never experienced it	3 knew before but the training opened a new perspective on it	4 knew before, the training opened my knowledge about it a little bit	5 knew very well. The training did not add any thing
Ecology					
Nature therapy theory					

Cont.

Group development stages					
Constricting knowledge					
Nature therapy – models – practical					
The overall Training					

(9) Detail the level of importance of the issues presented in the training in relevance to your work in the programme:

Issue	1 not relevant and not important	2 little relevancy and importance	3 medium relevancy and importance	4 very relevant and important	5 crucial
Ecology					
Nature therapy theory					
Group development stages					
Building programs					
Constructing knowledge					
Nature therapy – models – practical					

(10) Scale the level (rank) of lecture – workshop

Issue	1 horrible, boring	2 bad	3 medium	4 good	5 excellent
Ecology					
Nature therapy theory					
Group development stages					
Constructing knowledge					
Nature therapy – models – practical					
The overall training					

Thank you for your cooperation.

1.3.2 'Encounters with nature': End of the programme questionnaire (June 2004)

This questionnaire aims to explore your experience as a facilitator in this programme, the goal being to learn more about the issues involved in applying Nature Therapy methods in different settings with different client groups widening its theory. The questionnaire will be used as part of the overall data of the research in general and for the construction of the interview in particular.

Overall questions:

- (1) Name of the Institute:
- (2) Your name:
- (3) Your profession and qualifications:
- (4) Your age:
- (5) Facilitated alone / in cooperation with a partner
- (6) Your partner's profession and qualifications:
- (7) Did any other adults take part in the programme? Who, what was their profession and what was their status in the group:

Questions about the group:

- (8) Number of participants:
- (9) Age of participants:
- (10) Number of boys in the groups: () Number of girls in the group: ()
- (11) Characteristics of the group: Detail:

On the process:

- (12) What were the aims of the work? Please detail:
- (13) Write in detail what interventions and modes of work did you use, in what kind of nature environment: (detail):
- (14) Detail the process along the year long time axis:
- (15) To what extent did the programme change the level of violence in the group?
On a scale of: 1 (no change) to 5 (very much change)
In case there was a change, in what ways was this change expressed: (detail):

- (16) To what extent did the communication change? Please put on a scale of 1- 5.
In what ways? (detail):
- (17) To what extent were life-skills learned and developed? (scale)
- (18) To what extent was the children's attitude to nature changed? (scale)
- (19) According to your experience, if at all, in what ways was the programme
assimilated into the everyday school environment
- (20) Write something about the process of each one of the participants throughout
the program
- (a)
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)
- (21) According to your experience, what elements in the programme were the most
meaningful therapeutically?:

1	2	3	4	5
Had no impact	Had some impact	Had a medium impact	Had a strong impact	Had a great impact

Rituals

Methods and
kind of
interventions
Nature

Group
dynamics
The stand-
point of the
facilitators

Detail:

- (22) Did the training before the workshop help your facilitating during the
programme? : 1 (did not) – 2 (a great deal)
- (23) In what way did the training contribute to the way that your cooperative
relation and work was carried out: Scale: 1-5

Detail:

- (24) Would you have changed some things in the training? Detail:
- (25) In what way did the supervision you received contribute to your work?
Scale: 1 – 5. Detail:
- (26) Would you have changed something in the supervision? Detail:
- (27) To what extent did the program accomplish its aims? Scale: 1- 5
Detail:
- (28) Are there any specific issues that you think the program supported? What are they and in what way? Detail:
- (29) Were there, according to your experience, any elements in the program that disturbed or interrupted the therapeutic process? What were they? Detail:
- (30) Are there any elements that you would recommend changing in this programme in order to accomplish a better therapeutic impact? Detail:
- (31) General thoughts:

1.4 Questionnaire: Case Study 2 (July-September 2004)

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is part of a research which develops therapy in nature generally and Nature Therapy in particular. The questionnaire and the interview to follow concerns the workshops which took place on full-moon nights on the beach during September 2004, assuming that the outcome will enlighten the researcher with principles and processes dealing with the workshops specifically and the field in general.

Apology: Since the questionnaire is designed as a preliminary process to the interview, it has been written in a comprehensive manner, rather long and detailed and perhaps boring. I believe that it will support the process and it is an essential part of it.

The interview: The interview is semi-structured, with leading questions around which a discussion will be held. The questionnaire will provide a basis for the interview which may change according the dynamics, topics and contents which will come up during it. The interview will take about 3 hours.

The article:

The intention is to write an article based on the data provided by the questionnaire and interview. The article will include personal writing – narrative with theoretical academic writing.

The research will bear a qualitative-narrative nature and will be based mainly on Reason's model where the research is done in conjunction with 'research fellows' – people who participated in the workshop, in the research, and the therapy. The manner of this model works as follows: The researcher (also writer of the article in this case) does the first analysis of the data, sends it to the participants who are interested to take part in the writing of the article and they send back their response which is then processed by the researcher into an integrative article.

Though the article will be written in English (since it will be sent to English journals), you are requested to give your comments and narratives in Hebrew, and I will have it translated to English.

The length of the article will be about 4000-6000 words, depending on the journal's requirements.

I intend to ask Prof. John McLeod, the supervisor of my Ph.D., to take part in writing this article. His participation will support the writing process.

Since I intend to prepare the article as soon as the research work is finished, the actual writing and the decisions on it will remain in my hands, as the chief writer.

The audio material will be available to all participants if they wish to use it in any other academic manner. The questionnaires will remain confidential and will be kept by the researcher.

Participation in the above process – answering the questionnaire, the interview and the article writing are not obligatory and are not connected directly with the process we have been through in the workshops. It is possible to take part only in the first or in the first and second parts, without participating actively in the writing of the article.

Please make sure to return the filled questionnaire to Ronen by e-mail not later than 24.10.2004.

Please write about 1/2 a page (no more) in answering the questions.

Personal:

- (1) Name:
- (2) Gender:
- (3) Profession:
- (4) Have you participated in the past in a Nature Therapy workshop?
(no)
(yes) which one, specify:
- (5) Describe your feelings, thoughts and impression from the workshop
(generally)
- (6) Describe the personal process you went through in the workshop
- (7) Describe the group process which took place in the workshop

General:

- (8) What was nature's position in the process?
- (9) What weight did the facilitation have on the process?
- (10) What weight did rituals have in the process?
- (11) What weight did creativity have in the process?
- (12) What part did cognitive and words play in the process?
- (13) How did 'touching' affect the process?
- (14) What were the reciprocal relations between the workshops on the beach to the indoor meeting? Please relate to the contribution each had, and to the shared impact.
- (15) What was the effect of the personal talks in between the meetings? How did they affect you personally and professionally?
- (16) What space did the family talks (or talks with a closed friend) between the meeting have? How did they affect you personally and professionally?
- (17) If you have participated in a prior Nature Therapy workshop, did you find a difference between this one and the former one/s? Please refer to: Setting, group size, facilitator's approach?

About reaction with nature:

- (18) What was 'space' effect on the process (the sea, waves, wind, water-spray etc)?
- (19) What was the effect of working at night (stars, tiredness, temperature, etc)?
- (20) What effect did the sand and working with it have on the work?
- (21) How did the 'happenings' on the beach (of strangers, jeep traffic, etc) affect the workshop?
- (22) What was the effect of animals and plants (on the beach) on the process?

Summation:

- (23) Having been through the workshop's experience what in your opinion is a 'scared space' and how did work relating to it affect your personal process and the group process?
- (24) Having had the experience in the workshop what do you think is a ritual or a ritualistic approach to therapy and how did this type of work affect your process and the group's process?
- (25) What was most meaningful for you in the workshop?
- (26) What did you 'take' from the workshop personally?
- (27) How much did the workshop promote you on a personal basis?
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
very much much so-so little not at all
- (28) What did you 'take' from the workshop on a professional basis?
- (29) How much did the workshop promote you on a professional basis?
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
very much much so-so little not at all
- (30) What improvements should be applied on the personal and professional basis?
- (31) What should be improved in the process of learning?
- (32) What is Nature Therapy?
- (33) Thoughts, ponderings, additional feelings....

THANK YOU

APPENDIX 2 - RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL ARTICLES

2.1 In the Footsteps of Nature - Nature Therapy as an Emerging Therapeutic Educational Model

Article Published in Horizons, Vol 22. 27-32, Summer 2003. The Institute for Outdoor Learning, England.

Nature therapy is a new therapeutic - educational model which is carried out in nature. It is based on the insight that nature's healing elements can support the therapeutic process and that the dialogue between Man, Woman and Nature can have an empowering effect on people's physical, emotional and mental well-being.

This article aims to include some of the basic principles of the Nature Therapy model, integrating the author's personal journey, examples from his field work, and theory. It attempts to present some theoretical, philosophical and practical aspects from the overall model offering the practitioner a fresh perspective which can be incorporated into his/her own work. Since this model is quite new, the article aims to create a space for a dialogue and debate around the model and the issues it may concern.

When I was a child, at harsh times I used to run away to my secret home in nature. It was an old willow tree with branches reaching the ground, creating a shelter for me to hide in and feel safe. As a young man, I used to go on expeditions to the desert, alone or with friends or students searching the landscape for adventure and meaning. Years later, after concluding my ecology studies I spent time in the wilderness carrying out nature conservation work, studying the ecology and behaviour of the endangered Golan's Heights Wolves. I spent two years following them, letting them lead me deep into the spacious wilderness of nature. It was there, in moonlit dialogue with the wolves, where I was reminded of nature's healing powers. It was there where I learned to believe in it and to fear it; to sense it and to see the opportunities for mutual growth concealed in this dialogue between man and nature. Upon taking my leave of the wolves' research, I went to study dance and theatre and later on drama therapy. Upon completing these studies, I returned once again to nature, this time as a therapist, aware of the healing potential, seeking out its assistance in creating the right therapeutic space for my clients. Few years after I started conducting educational adventure group work in nature I worked as a drama therapist with an autistic youngster who had communication and social problems. At the beginning of our encounters there was very little room for communication and dialogue. Since he didn't want to go into the indoor clinic I joined him for walks, designating from inside the institution territories outside to a nearby Jordan riverbank. With time he chose a specific place on the river bank, under a willow tree, hidden from passers-by. The encounters used to commence in a concrete way, centred on a tea-making ceremony on a fire. As time progressed it became evident that the youngster pays grate attention and care to maintain the exact location, way and order in which the activity is held. In addition, it slowly became clear that he was constructing a small barrier around the zone which the tea ceremony was held in, making sure it is performed in its centre. As the barrier was built, through the direct physical encounter in nature and the repetition of the activities and ceremonies

conducted in this specified different place, our relationship built slowly. A crucial turning point occurred when the construction of the barrier around the tea place was completed and the youngster very dramatically expanded the use of language, and his desire to tell me his story and to connect. Later on, we conducted our sessions indoors, working through story-making and art. When difficult situations arouse, he used to lead me once again to the place on the riverbank which by then received the name “home in nature”. It seemed like something in him needed to check whether the safe sacred space that was build together was still there... (The Special Needs Class, Emek Hahula School, Israel, 1998-1999). This early experience as a Drama therapist helped me to see the options of holding therapy sessions in nature and opened up my awareness to the powerful therapeutic potential that lays in the creation of a sacred space in it. It was also evident that nature was more then just a setting, material or metaphors- provider and had a strong presence in the therapeutic process. Being drawn to continue this kind of work I was steered to explore this territory deeper trying to find answers to questions such as: What does it mean to conduct therapeutic work in a live and a dynamic space which lacks external borders? What does it mean to work in a space which does not belong to me or to the client? What does it mean to carry out this work in an interdependent place which the therapist or client don't control? What is nature's healing elements and how can I benefit and use them in the process? What is the place of nature in the process and what is the roll of the therapist in it? Are there any kind of inter-actions and relationships which take place between the client and nature and if there are, what are they and what is the best way to engage them in the process? Does this field require a unique kind of semantics, theory and ethics and if so, what are they? What kind of working models fit this setting and what new models can be developed? Overwhelmed by these questions, continuing to work therapeutically with varied populations I found some answers, which resulted in a new practical approach which I called: Nature Therapy.

The therapeutic aspects of ‘Nature therapy’ are based on four aspects:

- (1) Nature's ability to set a “Sacred Space” in today's post-modern age.
- (2) Nature as a therapeutic setting.
- (3) The healing potential of nature.
- (4) The trio relationship: Therapist – Client – Nature and code of ethics.

Because those four aspects are connected and intertwined, it is hard and artificial to address them separately. Even so, for the sake of the practicality of this article I will present each one of them separately, trusting the reader to create his/her own full picture by the end of it.

(1) Nature's ability to set a “Sacred Space” in today's post-modern age

The concept of the archetypal sacred space goes back to the beginning of civilization and can be found in most cultures. Its main function in shamanistic and other healing cures was to protect the enclosed site from the intrusion of evil forces. The sacred space is created by detaching a territory from its surrounding milieu and marking it as qualitatively different from the rest. The sacred space is a healing place per excellence (Eliade, 1959; Pendzik, 1994; Turner, 1986). In those days, when people lived in communities in nature, the shamans, the community's

healers, used to hold rituals to support the community and individuals in nature. They knew, through varied methods how to create the necessary sacred spaces, in which the healing and transformative rituals could take place (Eliade, 1959; Turner, 1986). Today, in the post-modern age, the concept of sacred space is still found in most of the Expressive Art therapies and in Drama therapy in particular. This discipline which is based on theatre, emphasises the therapeutic importance of the “different and distanced space”, represented by the theatre stage, allowing the formation of “as if fantastic reality” in which transformation and healing takes place (Jennings, 1995; Jennings 1998; Phil, 1996). Today, due to the fact that most people live in cities, “nature” as a place stays different and distanced from most people’s living places. This reality means that nature has some of the basic characteristics of a sacred space. These characteristics of nature can, when rituals are added enlarge the therapeutic potential of what might occur in it. Going back to the therapeutic process which was presented in the example of the autistic youngster who created his own sacred space on the Jordan riverbank, it seems appropriate to conclude with Joseph Campbell’s writing of sacred space: “This is a place where you can experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be, this is the place of creative incubation. At first it may seem that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place, something will eventually happen” (Campbell, 1968).

(2) Nature as a therapeutic setting:

Most therapies are conducted in an indoor environment with clear and fixed definitions of space and time, known as setting. The classic psychoanalytic approach defines the setting very strictly, seeing any deviation from it as an acting out or enactment. Bleger, who examined thoroughly the therapeutic setting, said that a therapeutic situation includes setting and process, the first being permanent, and the other dynamic. He also claims that the therapeutic process can be examined only in a fixed setting, when setting changes - it becomes a process (Bleger, 1967). Barkan, exploring the different faces of setting said that the setting cannot be clearly separated from the process which in fact doesn’t only structures it, but furthermore, becomes part of it (Barkan, 2002).

When coming to conduct therapeutic work in nature, it must be acknowledged that it is quite a different environment to conduct therapy in than the indoors, human made and controlled one. It can change its characteristics according to the seasons, time of day and weather without the therapist or client control, making it impossible to keep it fixed or permanent and therefore, according to Bleger and Barkan, take a part in the construction of the setting and process alike. Nature therapy does not only acknowledge nature’s influence upon the therapeutic process, it furthermore seeks to expand the therapeutic field by involving these aspects of nature in it. It offers to address some of its dynamic, uncertainties and changes as an opportunity for the client (and therapist) to experience unfamiliar situations which can bring about new learning and insights. Bernstein said of this element: “The therapeutic changes occur because wilderness evokes coping behaviors rather than defensive behaviors” (Bernstein 1998).

During the years 2001-2003 I was working therapeutically in nature with a group of special-needs youth (2001-2003, Renanim school. Kiryat Shemona, Israel). The activities were held in a small nature reserve located near the school. At the

beginning of one of the first sessions we were caught in an unexpected rain. The group panicked and wanted to stop the activity and return to the protected, sheltered and familiar school. I stopped to think: "what is the therapeutic potential of this moment?" "What new learning can this group benefit from this situation and what about the safe keeping of the group's emotional and physical space?" Knowing the overprotected environment this youth were living in, having little encouragement to face personal challenges or to create change in their life, trusting the rain to end after a while, I chose to confront the group's avoidance pattern by offering to continue the session in the reserve. After a group discussion, they decided to continue in the reserve, to explore the best ways to cope with the new situation by looking for a shelter from the rain or building one. This experience which was not planned or controlled by me, the therapist, gave the group the chance to confront one of its basic patterns. It taught the group an important lesson about the ways it can actively cope with uncertain situations, taking responsibility for their own life by creating a concrete safe reality for them to be in, rather than going back to their familiar, overprotecting and passive zone. This example illustrates the way Nature Therapy addresses nature as a therapeutic setting, considers the natural environment as a physical setting (location) and part of the process at the same time. In a way this model offers to address nature's dynamic and unexpected changes as offerings of therapeutic interventions. This attitude towards nature does not mean that the therapist loses control of the session or the activity, it means that he is willing to let go of some of his/her control and concepts of what and how things should occur, stay open and attentive to the natural setting and seeks the best way to assist its special characteristics for the strengthening of the therapeutic process.

(3) The healing potential of nature:

According to the Nature therapy approach, nature contains certain elements and factors that when addressed properly can strengthen and support the development of the therapeutic process. Some of these factors are physical and concrete while others are abstractive and conceptual.

A. Physical and esthetic elements of nature:

The physical healing elements are concrete factors: textures, sounds, smells and tastes which can contribute to a person's relaxation, awakening of forgotten memories and stimulate sensations and emotions which might be relevant and supportive to the therapeutic process.

The **Aesthetic Moments** are varied, beautiful moments which the experience in nature might include, moments such as a sight of a beautiful landscape, sunrise or an encounter with a wild animal.

These elements enable the client to be held and enclosed allowing him/her to develop a sense of wonderment and presence. Since those healing elements are constantly present in the natural environment they can support the client's healing without his, or the therapist intervention. All he has to do is to be present and let himself be touched, held and moved by them. On the practical aspect the Nature therapy model encourages the creation of a sacred – therapeutic space and ritual in a location where some of these physical and aesthetic elements are present. Doing that can include them in the experience , strengthening the therapeutic process For

example; in a case where the therapeutic issue is rebirth, a therapist who wishes to use this principal will create the sacred space and conduct the ritual nearby running water or spring integrating some activities with it.

During the years 1998-2002 I was living near by the Banias River at the Upper Galilee, Israel. Every morning, I used to wake up with the sunrise and go to the river to conduct a morning ceremony. One of the purposes of this ceremony was to create a space for a harmonies transition between the night's time and the newborn day's time and to allow the awakening and preparation of the physical body, the soul and mind for it. The ceremony included a slow and quiet walk, some physical exercises turning into a dance in connection with a rock or tree, meditation, a swim and a walk or run home. The first stage of the ceremony, the walk, the awakening, was carried out while the sun was rising, changing the colors of the sky from dark to bright, revealing the outline of the landscape and gradually causing the temperature to rise. During the walk I could see night-active animals such as wild bores and jackals decrease their activity and disappear in to the grove while day-active animals such as song birds and hyraxes became visible and increased their activity. This first phase of the ceremony which was done in parallel to nature's transition from night to day, allowed me to go through my own personal transition being held and supported by the parallel natural process. The graduate warming up of the day encouraged me to take some cloths off and physically unfold myself to nature. The lighting up and the revelation of the landscape encouraged me to look around and observe it. The sounds of the birds, water and wind made me listen and become attentive. Being there while the whole universe wakes up encouraged me to open up, sense, observe and attend not only the nature around me but also the nature within, providing me with the right space to depart from the passive night time, check how am I today before welcoming the newborn day and the activities and interactions it brings. This ceremony, which was designated for a specific purpose and was held in a specific place and time, had included many physical and aesthetic healing elements. It had an important impact on the way I perceived and acted during the coming day and on my whole well-being throughout that.

B. Connection to the “universal truth” and the cyclic laws of life:

The “universal truth and cyclic laws” are a phenomenon which exist in nature from time immemorial and will continue to exist in it for the foreseeable future. The universal truth and cyclic laws comprise natural phenomenon such as sunrise and sunset, the cyclic change of the seasons act, aside with biological phenomenon such as; migration, territorialism, courting and act. The Nature therapy model addresses these natural phenomenon's as a hidden story teller or as a narrative in the backcloth, which in an indirect way can connect the client to his/her personal issues on his/her own cyclic journey. The connection between these external phenomena in the landscape with the personal landscape can help a client cope with the basic therapeutic issue of transformation: giving birth, aging and dying. Furthermore, the connection to these elements, when addressed properly can help a person understand that his/her cyclic process is unavoidable and normal, shared and common to all living beings. This awareness and understanding can give a person a sense of belonging and holding which can ease his/her growing or dying pains and support him/her in completing his/her personal journey. Wheelwright & Shmidt wrote of this element: “The wilderness can provide us with a continuing contact with life and infinity, it gives us

the opportunity literally to seek our beginnings with no fear that such beginnings might turn out to be single moment in time, thus finite and no longer compelling (Wheelwright & Shmidt, 1991).

During the years 2001-2003, I was working therapeutically in nature with a group of special-needs youth in the Upper Galilee Israel in a program: Encounters in Nature. During the winter of 2002-2003 the work was conducted on a weekly basis in the Hula Nature Reserve, a home for many migrating birds. The sessions opened with a drumming ritual, a journey in the reserve, a “building a home in nature” activity, processing and a closing with a drumming ritual. The second phase of the session was made of a journey in the reserve, in which the group explored and observed the changes which occurred in it during the week that passed. This led to a similar process within the group, exploring the parallel changes it went through during the past week. During sessions which were conducted at the month of February the group noticed that many migrating birds, such as Pelicans and Cormorants that were seen in big flocks have gone missing and apparently left the reserve. The group, which used to come to the site once a week on a regular basis and apparently saw those birds as a significant part of it, responded in quite a strong way expressing emotions such as amazement, anger, sadness and happiness. As the process went on it became clear that this natural event of the birds leaving the group's sacred space and the change it brought about awakened a few group issues regarding the future of the group which were considered a taboo before, the feelings around the issue of their teacher's pregnancy and delivery approaching time and therefore leaving the school, the death of one of the participants brother, and the approaching departure from the reserve and the home in nature which they build in it. Relating to the birds migration, being a normal, cyclic universal phenomenon of separation and return, ending and beginning, life and death, didn't only release the taboo around this group issues and allowed the group to work them through, it also brought relief and hope, understanding and acknowledgement that the birds will return next year, and the group and individual process will go on. This natural event not only supported the group in dealing with a few of their hurting issues, it furthermore taught them about their connection to nature around them and its basic universal cyclic laws which when acknowledged and listened to can support them in their future transitions from one state to another.

(4) The trio relationship: Client – Therapist - Nature and a code of ethics

The term relationship stands at the centre of psychodynamic therapeutic approaches. Many terms such as transference, counter transference, projection, attachment and act were created to address and describe the varied relationships which occur in therapy. Most of these terms refer to the client – therapist relationships, and only very few relate to the relationships which exist between the client, the therapist and the nonhuman, natural things around them, which are also present in different ways in the session. The Nature therapy model seeks to expand and widen this field in a way that doesn't only consider nature's involvement in the process but furthermore includes it as a partner in it. Nature, according to this model, can take part in creating and holding the therapeutic environment, assisting the therapist in constructing the process. It can be regarded as a container and witness, a sensational and emotional stimulator; a provider of opportunities to explore and trigger these stimulations by working with the natural elements it contains (trees, sand, wind. Water...). In addition it is a hidden story teller, telling the narrative of universal

truth and cyclic laws, helping the client to work some of his/her personal issues through. At the same time, the fact that nature as a partner is also (like a human co-therapist) a living entity, means that it can also be touched and influenced by the process. This influence can be positive and allow mutual growth or negative in cases when aggressive and distractive behaviours are acted upon it. This attitude of seeing the therapeutic field and relationship as a trio creates a unique code of ethics which seeks to support this approach and contribute to the creating of a safe and allowing space. This ethics comes to enable and support the growth and development of the client with out harming or destroying the natural setting in which the session takes place in.

During the year 2001, I was working therapeutically in nature with a group of juvenile delinquent (Etzba Hagalil School, Israel 2001). In the beginning of the process, as part of the group contract it was allowed (and even promoted) to physically express anger and aggression towards the natural environment instead of towards other members of the group or oneself. This behaviour which was legitimated by me as a therapist had a cognitive-psychological rational known as sublimation. A few weeks later I realised that the aggressive behaviour didn't decrease and didn't allow a formation of a safe place or the creation of a sacred space which were necessary for the further development of the process. Furthermore, it became evident that this sublimation behaviour did not only raise ecological ethical issues regarding the use and damaging the environment, it also worked against the group members showing them that even nature cannot put a stop to their distractive powers and safely contain them (after their parents and school teachers have failed to do so before). I came to believe that symbolically speaking giving such behavioural allowance brings the group to believe that not only they have the strength to hurt and destroy themselves and that even the therapist can not enforce limitations to protect them from themselves, but more that they can destroy the world they live in and the option and hope for a better world to live in with it. This experience made me rethink about my relationship and contract with nature from a nature therapist's perspective. I tried to create a dialogue with it, to hear and see it as a partner in the process and as such to acknowledge my contract with it, to examine and validate my commitment to its' safe keeping not only from an ecological perspective but, also from a therapeutic one. I strongly realized that it is neither mine nor anybody's private clinic and that if one wants to carry out therapeutic work in it, it is he who needs to take care of it for the sake of both clients and nature.

The educational aspect:

The educational aspect of Nature therapy acts upon the fields of experiential and environmental education. It explores the human distractive behaviour towards nature from a psycho-social aspect. The model claims that these behaviours are linked metaphorically with the psycho-social attempt to annihilate, imprison and defend ourselves against the wild and impulsive parts which exist in ourselves, parts that may (just as the forces of nature) be uncovered and take control of us. For this reason, we try to exile, imprison or destroy them before they have a chance to gain the upper hand.

Freud, founder of the modern psychotherapy related to this relation to nature and said that: "The aim of civilization is to protect us from nature... The natural elements ask to mock human control straggling against people with tremendous might,

forcing them to fight back by developing civilization..." (Freud, 1961). However, if these behaviours are so deeply ingrained in us and reflect a profound cultural norm, how can we foster a change in the attitude of people towards nature, towards themselves and towards their peers? The conventional wisdom of environmental activists favours 'behavioural' explanations which frighten and blame, including the use of apocalyptic forecasts of ecological holocaust, accusing the public of apathy and lassitude (Naess, 1989; Shafrir, 2002). The Nature therapy model claims, far-ranging observation that considers psychological perspective, that the conventional environmental behavioural approach may create more havoc than benefit, as it encourages phenomena such as resistance and detachment which can blur a sense of belonging and identification, thus merely increasing the alienation and destruction. The Nature therapy model claims that in order to generate such change the working process needs to be experiential and involve all communication channels: imagination, physical, cognitive, emotional, social and should also address the person's belief system. The educational aspect framework of Nature therapy posits an alternative to the conventional educational approach by claiming that a personal, growing experience in nature can help people change their attitude towards nature, helping them experience it as a safe, nourishing place. This change can contribute to the inclusion of nature as a 'good' part of the 'self' which will hopefully reduce phenomena such as alienation, detachment in all their various destructive ramifications. Moreover, the approach claims that due to this perceptual change, which occurs as a gradual process, it is possible to construct a sense of belonging, identification and concern which will eventually turn human behaviour towards nature from relations based on alienation and control to those based on co-existence, involvement and mutuality.

An inspiring illustration of this approach was demonstrated during the summer of 2002, as part of the When Mountains Roar (When Mountains Roar, The British Council, The Foreign Ministry, The Ministry of Science and Culture, 2002). The program took place in a designated area demarcated by the group for the express purposes of this workshop. Within this space conversations and intimate artistic experiences took place alongside activities such as cooking and camping in the space nearby. On the fourth day of the program, a convoy of jeeps on an organized tour rode by. The jeeps veered off their course and tried to pave their way through the neighbouring slope, enjoying the challenges posed for them by nature. This activity of the jeep drivers came close to the group's space with noise and tumult that threatened to disrupt the intimate space, damage the landscape and leave tell-tale footsteps and tire treads. The group's furious reaction, deciding not to limit their reaction to emotional intensity, but to actively attempt to guard the beautiful landscape, was very moving for me. After the event, I understood that my excitement stemmed from the situation in which the concern of a group for the beauty and unique attributes of the personal, group and the landscape merged. The members of the group identified with their surroundings to such an extent that though this had never been explicitly mentioned in the program, they ventured out in defence of nature, feeling (consciously or unconsciously) the link between preserving nature and nurturing man.

Summary:

This article presented the basic principles of the Nature Therapy, an emerging independent therapeutic – educational model which takes place in nature and acts upon its healing elements and the dialogue with it. The article attempts to illustrate

these principles in a way that offers the practitioner a fresh perspective which can be taken by the practitioner and incorporated into his/her work. The practical working models and methods of Nature Therapy which were not presented in this article will be presented at a latter time. The article also invites a dialogue and debate around the issues it touches, especially around the place and roll of nature in the outdoor education and outdoor adventure therapy.

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)

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2.2 The Therapeutic Aspect of Nature Therapy

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been substantial growth in the interest and use of Drama Therapy. This development has brought to the wide field of psychotherapy new experiential, non-verbal and creative concepts and ways of working. Despite the fact that Drama Therapy originated from theatre, and is strongly connected to the concept of rituals and therefore also to shamanism, most of this work is carried out indoors, far away from nature; where rituals and shamanism were created. Nature Therapy is an innovative therapeutic approach taking place in nature. It is an interdisciplinary and experiential approach which draws from disciplines such as Drama Therapy, Narrative Psychology, Adventure Therapy, Anthropology and Ecopsychology. Due to its ritualistic and creative character Nature Therapy can also be regarded as an outdoors development of Drama Therapy with an additional reference and contact point - nature. Since the approach integrates both theory and practical models, this article will focus on the four models of the approach, in order to keep the article coherent and not to over flood the reader; leaving other aspects to be presented later. The article will include examples from therapeutic interventions carried out by the author, illustrating some of the ways in which it can be operated. Since several of the concepts the approach offers are quite new the aim of this paper is also to call for dialogue and debate on some of the direct and indirect issues which emerge from it.

The Nature-Therapy Approach

Nature-Therapy is an innovative therapeutic-educational approach which takes place in nature. Nature Therapy addresses the therapeutic process as a journey allowing the client to work on relevant emotional, physical, spiritual, cognitive issues. This journey, taking place in direct contact with nature, invites the clients to explore not only personal and interpersonal issues but also issues relating to their relationships with the culture and environment in which they live. This position towards the process expands on the traditional therapeutic perspective claiming that the 'self' is influenced and shaped not only by his or her relationships with other people but also by relationships and interactions with the culture and environment that the person lives in. Since the approach also draws from the concepts of ritual and shamanism, relating to the days when people were living in communities in nature and due to the dramatic, metaphoric and creative characteristics of the approach, it also strongly relates to drama therapy and can also be addressed as an outdoors development of it with an additional reference point - nature. The approach also relates to Ecopsychology which claims that in the direct contact with nature, people can connect with natural healing elements and that the dialogue between man, woman, and nature can have an empowering effect on people's physical, emotional, and mental well-being (Berger 2003; Beringer and Martin 2003; Burns 1998; Harper 1995; Roszak, Gomes, and Allen 1995; Totton 2003). According to this concept, nature is addressed not only as a

setting or tool provider but rather as a ‘partner’ in the work shaping and influencing the setting and process.

The theoretical principles:

The theoretical aspects of Nature Therapy are based on three main principles:

- (1) Nature’s potential to serve as a “sacred space” and the use of ritual to support the process.
- (2) The healing elements of nature and their use to assist the therapeutic process.
- (3) The three-way relationship between the therapist, client and nature and its influence upon the therapist’s position towards the client and process.

Nature-therapy also explores and defines the specific characteristics of the setting, and develops a unique corresponding code of ethics (Further reading in Berger 2003 or www.naturetherapy.org).

The approach integrates four independent models: (a) Nature–Adventure, (b) Art with Nature, (c) Building a Home in Nature and (d) Conservation Therapy.

The four models include various techniques and attitudes that respond to different therapeutic needs. In addition, it explores the ways in which these four models can metaphorically represent a developmental dimension of human – nature relationships, moving from a challenging and controlling position into an interdependent and coexistent one. It also investigates the various ways in which this developmental dimension can be used as a metaphor for the learning process of the clients, helping them to learn more about their relationship with themselves, others, and the world around.

Another core element of Nature-Therapy, is that it allows the client to reflect, relate, and develop his or her capabilities to cope and move comfortably between the “being” and “doing” states, where the movement between the states can be addressed as another coping mechanism. Once adopted, it can help and reinforce the client’s overall coping skills and help the person deal with the challenges and unexpected changes life may bring in a more satisfying and efficient manner.

The Models:

(a) Nature-Adventure

The Nature-Adventure model is drawn from the field of Adventure-Therapy which according to Ringer’s definition: “originates activities involving the combination of physically and psychologically demanding outdoor activities and/or remote natural settings” (Ringer, 2003, pp. 19-20). As this field is fairly wide, different definitions can be found. According to Gillis and Ringer for example, Adventure Therapy is a “Strategic combination of adventure activities with therapeutic change processes with the goal of making changes in the lives of participants. Adventure provides the concrete, action-based, experiential medium for therapy. The specific activity used is (ideally) chosen to achieve a particular therapeutic goal” (Gillis & Ringer 1999, pp.29). Since Nature-Therapy takes place in nature and since some streams of Adventure-Therapy have recently been adapted to the urban environment and include human-made challenging indoor activities (Ringer 2003), it seems that Nature-Therapy has more in common with Wilderness-Therapy which can probably be considered as one of Adventure Therapy’s approaches. The wilderness approach to therapy, according to Powch (1994), takes place in the wilderness and should incorporate these components: “confronting fear in some way,

experiencing trust in the group, immediacy and concreteness of feedback in the wilderness environment; and the even-handedness of consequences of wilderness” (Powch 1994, pp. 11-27). Crisp (1998) has argued that Wilderness- Therapy is based on two interventions formats: “(a) wilderness-based camping, which entails establishing a base camp with minimal equipment in an isolated environment, and (b) expeditions, which consist of small groups moving from place to place in a self-sufficient manner using different modes such as back-packing, rafting, canoeing etc” (Crisp 1998, pp.56-74).

An example of this form of therapy and the way in which nature intertwines with it is given by Gillis and Ringer (1999, pp. 29): “having two persons who have difficulties in their relationship, such as father and son or husband and wife, paddle a canoe will require them to cooperate in order to be successful. A 14-day backpacking trip for a group of adjudicated youth provides a self-containing purposeful therapeutic community where tasks such as erecting tents, reading a compass, or cooking a meal provides challenges in communication and discipline which can be utilized for therapeutic outcomes”.

The above examples illustrate the use of nature as a setting in which interpersonal and behavioral learning can take place, arising from the achievements of clients in overcoming challenges presented by the natural world.

The Nature–Adventure model is derived from both Adventure-Therapy and Wilderness-Therapy, by integrating elements from them. Nature is addressed as a backdrop to or stage for adventure (Beringer and Martin 2003), which gives the participants a chance to encounter and confront their own fears and to discover new and more efficient ways to cope with their fears and disabilities. The therapeutic process focuses on the ways in which the client deals with the challenges and adventures in nature and not directly with his/her relationship with it. This way of addressing nature (as a setting and tool provider) also supports the first stage of the developmental dimension of the human-nature relationships which was mentioned earlier: challenge and control. Another aspect of this active, task-oriented, and challenging approach is that it invites the client to experience the “doing” states and therefore develop them, as opposed to experiencing and developing the “being” states. Nature-Therapy offers the therapist an effective, active, and concrete tool to facilitate issues such as communication, trust, intimacy and problem solving (Bandoroff, 2003). Another aspect can be used as a means to develop more effective coping mechanisms, and to help the participants connect with their inner strength. In addition, as part of the over all approach, being in a distant and contrasting environment to the participant’s everyday surroundings and the challenging experiences it offers the participants a special opportunity to reflect upon the way they live their lives in general, and the ways they deal with challenges in particular.

(b) Art with Nature

The Art with Nature model is drawn from the theory and techniques of Drama Therapy and transports elements from the classic indoor setting into an outdoor, natural one. According to Jennings (1992), one of Drama Therapy’s pioneers, Drama Therapy is the “Specific application of theatre structures and drama processes with a

declared intention that is therapy.” Lahad ⁽¹⁾ in Jennings (1992) defines Drama Therapy differently, saying that it is “A combination of multi-modal, the multi-modality of the art that manifests itself in the dramatic act. Drama Therapy enables both the therapist and the client to be able to move through different mediums and explore different areas, and use the ‘dramatic part’ as the climax or the turning point of things. The taking up, or taking of a role, the negotiation with others, the role-playing with others, brings it a further step ahead – it mobilizes”.

The Art with Nature model transports these “theatre structures and drama processes” from the traditional indoor settings into the natural, outdoor ones. It may integrate techniques such as story-telling, story-making, art, drama, movement and dance with a direct, concrete encounter with nature. According to this model, the attitude towards the encounter of participants with each other and with nature, is taken from a metaphorical and narrative perspective, using the natural setting as a way to establish the appropriate ‘distancing’. The concept of distancing is one of Drama Therapy’s key principles (Jennings 1998a; Landy, 1996) and is easy to be established in a surrounding which is (in most cases) different and remote from the casual surrounding in which the client lives his or her life. According to this perspective, Nature Therapy works in a similar way to the way Drama Therapy works with the ‘two realities’ concept (Jennings, 1998a) with one major difference: the fact that the therapeutic setting, being nature is indeed a different reality but yet a concrete and live one and not only metaphoric. This element has various applications on the experience of the client during the session and on the way the learning from the experience can be brought back in to his or her every day’s life. These aspects of Nature Therapy are connected to one of the approach’s basic principles; relating to nature as a sacred space and therefore a healing space (Eliade 1959; Pendzik 1994; Turner 1986). This concept is also be found in Drama therapy; addressing the theater stage as a sacred space (Pendzik 1994). This attitude to nature is strongly connected with the way Nature Therapy addresses the process, relating to it as a ritual and journey. This way of working is also common in Drama Therapy, where the concept of ritual makes one of the approach core principles (Grainer 1995; Jennings 1998a; Jones 1996).

According to Nature Therapy, nature is taken as an open and abundant setting which invites the participants to explore themselves and their relationships with others through direct contact with nature, using various creative forms. The artistic experience in the natural setting helps the participants to find, make, and tell their own narratives, which were discovered during the work in nature and through the dialogue with it. In this approach, nature is taken not only as a setting and tool provider, but also metaphorically as a companion or teacher on the journey.

From a drama therapy perspective ‘nature’ can be addressed as taking a specific role in one’s act, offering a quiet story in the background, which metaphorically lies within its landscape. Some of these background stories, incorporated with suitable rituals and interventions, can support the participants on their journeys, enabling them to touch upon, reflect, and process some of their own personal issues.

(1) Quotation from an interview by Prof. Jennings in the chapter “Interviews with Pioneers and Practitioners” (pp. 179-182), in *Handbook of Dramatherapy* Edited by S. Jennings et al. London: Routledge.

Example⁽²⁾: A two-day desert workshop with a group of 16 young men and women from Judea and Samaria, Israel who were victims of terror incidents can illustrate the use of this model. The workshop included a journey through the desert, integrating rituals, adventure activities (such as navigation and building a camp) and creative activities (such as story making, movement, and art). It aimed at connecting the participants with their personal and group strength, in order to develop their coping mechanisms. The workshop was also aimed at creating a safe space to share and process issues of grief and loss. During one of the activities, the participants were asked to build a display out of natural materials using the environment as a stage, to describe the way they cope with their everyday life in the harsh reality in Judea and Samaria. Having presented their works, they were asked to decide how they would like to leave the artistic displays in the landscape: (a) as they were, in the same representative form and location, letting time accompanied by nature's forces change them, or (b) take them apart and put the natural materials back in nature where they were found. This intervention opened up an extensive debate about "the things that are left behind" and a talk about dead relatives, friends, memories, and places... the discussion also touched upon issues of time: How do we manage it; past – present – future, what is important to leave behind and where are we in this process? This experience allowed the group to touch and open painful issues, which remained unspoken and regarded as taboo until then. This opening allowed the participants to share their individual painful stories and feel they were not alone.

In this example, nature was regarded not only as a setting and tool provider but also as a live stage for the participants to build their creations and rituals which were later performed. This live, dynamic, and independent stage, as opposed to the indoor inanimate, manmade one, metaphorically told a quiet yet universal story in the background, a story about the uncontrolled changes time brings and about the uncertainties in life that we all cope with.

In his discussion of the roles that rituals take in teaching people to accept the unavoidability of faith, Evans (1997) says that these rituals can help people deal with nature's uncontrolled forces as they "Enlarge the communal mutual experience, allowing people to understand that they are not alone and that they are all part of one entity which can not be divided" (Evans 1997, pp.21).

The unique characteristic of the natural setting – being alive, independent, and dynamic – allows the therapist to address nature as a quiet story in the background, and to make interventions that are derived not only from the relationship between the therapist and the participants, or with the art form, but also with the live and uncontrolled nature around. This approach may open new doors to the process, enlarge it, and give it a different, perhaps stronger, outcomes and meanings.

A different example⁽³⁾ which may outline the ways in which the natural setting can influence and be integrated into the process can be illustrated by one of the activities in a three-day training course which took place at the Banias River Reserve, Upper-Galilee, Israel. On Friday, before Shabbat, a group of six men and six women was invited to create and conduct a preparation ritual for the Shabbat. This ritual was supposed to include a closure of the week and a purification process for welcoming the Shabbat ceremony. The group was divided into two groups, separating men and

⁽²⁾ Workshop held by the Israeli Stress Prevention Center in Ramon Crater, Israel 2002

⁽³⁾ Workshop held by the Nature Therapy Center, in the Banias River Reserve, Israel 2003

women, each of them choosing a different place to conduct the ceremony. The group met again before sunset for the welcoming of the Shabbat ceremony. It was exciting to hear about the process and experiences that had taken place. It seemed that the experiences and processes occurred not only thanks to the communal intention during the ritual, or to the archetypal meaning of the use of the water element, but also, thanks to the physical connection with nature and the concrete contact with the clean and running water of the river.

One of the participants expressed his intake saying: “I don’t know what exactly happened there, and the truth is I also don’t care. What I do know is that the water cleaned and washed everything away. No matter how much I cried, the water kept washing all the tears away”

The above examples illustrate some of the ways in which the special characteristics of the natural setting, when addressed by the therapist, can enlarge and support the process. It also demonstrates some of the theoretical principles of Nature Therapy which have been mentioned in the first paragraph of this article.

This model, in comparison to the Nature-Adventure model, allows the therapist to take a step backwards and to invite nature to take various parts in the shaping of the process. An additional element, within the wide “doing-being” dimension of the overall approach, is the opportunity it gives the participants to move from the doing state into the being state (which occurs during and after the doing-creative phases) and to experience the positive movement between the two.

(c) Building a Home in Nature

The Building a Home in Nature model originated from the author’s therapeutic work experience with an autistic youngster⁽⁴⁾. In the first meetings the boy, who had communication and social difficulties, didn’t want to go into the indoor clinic and used to lead the author for walks near his classroom. In time, the boundaries of these walks expanded from the inside well-known area of the institution to a nearby but unfamiliar riverbank of the Jordan River.. As time went by, the boy chose a specific place on the riverbank, under a willow tree, hidden from passersby. Since the therapeutic goal of these sessions was to help the boy enlarge his social and communication skills, the encounters would commence in a concrete way, centered on a tea-making ceremony on a fire. As time progressed, it became evident that the youngster was paying careful attention to maintaining the exact location, manner, and order in which the activities were held. In addition, it became clear that he was constructing a small barrier around the zone in which the tea ceremony took place, making sure it was performed in its center. As the barrier was built, through the direct physical encounter in nature and the repetition of the activities and ceremonies conducted in this specified different place, the relationship between the boy and the therapist was slowly built. A crucial turning point occurred when the construction of the barrier around the tea place was completed and the youngster, very dramatically expanded his use of language, and the desire to connect with the therapist and tell him his story. Later on, as winter commenced, the sessions moved indoors to the clinic, working through story-making and art. When difficult situations arose, the boy would once again lead the therapist to the place on the riverbank which by then had been

⁽⁴⁾ Work which was carried out at the Special Need Class, Emek Hahula School, Israel 1998/9

named the Home in Nature. It seemed to the therapist that something in the boy needed to check whether the safe sacred space that they physically built together, a space that also symbolized the connection that was built between him and the therapist, was still there.

In this model, the client or group, accompanied by the therapist, builds a Home in Nature – a safe, sacred space where personal stories can be revealed and shared and rituals can be performed. This archetypal concept of the sacred space is not new, it goes back to the beginning of civilization and can be found in most cultures. The notion that sacred space is inherently therapeutic is at the roots of most healing rituals, where a careful consecration of the space is believed to have an impact upon the effectiveness of the cure (Pendzik, 1994; Turner 1986).

In this respect, the Home in Nature offers clients a chance to build a safe place to bring forth their dilemmas, conflicts, and difficulties, offering a different, self-made place to explore, reflect, and experience new, perhaps more satisfying ways of living their lives.

The Home in Nature model works similarly to the alternative realities principle in the narrative approach. The therapeutic encounter is constructed together by the therapist and client, while the therapist creates a space for the making and telling of alternative–parallel stories to the ones the client originally came with to resolve. These alternative stories, which carry personal strength and knowledge, invite the client to listen and explore other parallel options of life (narratives) which might enable the creation of a more satisfying story or way of life. (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Meier 2002; White & Epston 1999).

In a similar way that work on a relevant theater play, taking on a role and embodying a story in drama therapy can be addressed as a therapeutic process (Landy, 1996), so can the concrete process of building the Home in Nature be addressed as a therapeutic intervention which stands on its own. This non-directive and non-verbal way of working can help a person to bypass his or her own ‘defense mechanisms’ and explore, experience and develop new, perhaps more satisfying ways of living his life

Home in Nature offers clients a safe place to bring forth the dilemmas, conflicts, and difficulties of their life stories, offering a different, self-made place for perspective, to explore, reflect, and experience new, perhaps more satisfying ways of living their lives. According to this concept the Home in Nature model also works similarly to the alternative realities principle and the concept of partnership in the construction of narratives as in the narrative approach.. The therapeutic encounter is constructed together by the therapist and client, while the therapist creates a space for the making and telling of alternative–parallel stories to the ones the client originally came with to resolve. These alternative stories which carry personal strength and knowledge invite the client to listen and explore other parallel options of life which might enable the creation of a more satisfying story or way of living (Freedman & Combs 1996; Meier 2002; White & Epston 1999).

The option given to the client to plan and construct a "home" is metaphorically parallel to the options of re-creating the personal narrative, giving them a different perspective. Once the building process has been completed in a satisfying manner, the therapist and client can set off from the secure home to other natural environment and expand the encounter with other activities in different landscapes, knowing there is a safe space to return to. In a practical manner, due to the active position of the therapist in this method, it is important to emphasize that the use of the word Home might

trigger by itself specific issues like: family, home, belonging and identity, issues, which may not be the intention and aims of the specific process. Therefore, in case the therapist wants to create a wider space for projection or to facilitate the process in another direction, it is worthwhile to find and use different titles such as: space, playground, camp and act. The building, shaping, and defending of the Home in Nature, as well as the client's positions towards it are part of the process (if not the process it self...) and may also influence it in various ways.

According to this model, an analogy lies between the physical-concrete building and maintenance of the Home in Nature and the building and maintenance of the potential space between the therapist and client. This element indicates the delicate relationship and interdependency that exists between the therapeutic process and the actual space – nature. The model specifically encourages the building and defense of the separation between inside and outside and supports the formation of a unified self that can build and maintain a person's own home – self. Nature is taken as an active partner in the process, allowing the client to explore his/her interdependence and mutuality with it. This model, in comparison with the two previous ones, allows the therapist to take a further step backwards allowing an invitation to nature to take various parts in the shaping of the process. It expands the dynamic movement between “doing” and “being”, which becomes possible during the building of the Home and the creation of an enabling, safe place.

(d) Conservation Therapy

Conservation Therapy is a self-designed model, part of the Nature Therapy approach. It was created as a result of the author's desire to explore how elements from his own personal healing experiences (gained in his research work as an ecologist working with endangered wild animals) can be introduced into therapeutic work.

Conservation therapy takes place through the active treatment and care of natural resources, preferably wild animals.. The core of conservation therapy lies in the basic humanistic belief that by seeing, giving, and helping others (people, animals or landscapes), people can connect with their own inner strengths and achieve and sense the meaning, purpose, and value in life.

The practical work with the model consists of two parts: (a) the diagnosis of the group, and determination of the therapeutic-educational aims and ways of achieving them; and (b) finding a nature conservation project that answers these aims. The work itself integrates techniques from drama therapy (or other creative - psychological approaches) which support the processing and further work of the issues that arise in the actual work with the animals. In this approach, compared with Drama Therapy, Nature is taken not only as a live metaphor that allows the participants to encounter and process their own personal issues, but also as a means to observe and encounter a live animal, plant or landscape that they can contact, connect to, and form a meaningful relationship with. During this work, the client can support the rehabilitation of the animal or landscape, help it in its healing and reintroduction to nature and through this, experience a parallel process which can help and support his or her own healing and personal development.

An example of this model is taken from the case study of To Fly⁽⁵⁾. It was the final unit in a year's process of work with two groups of special-needs teenagers. In addition to the classic organic, emotional, and social issues that this population generally deals with, this group was also characterized by half of its members being adopted, living in foster parent's homes. The aim of To Fly was to connect the participants with inner strength, to support the concluding stage of the year-long process while assisting its members in processing issues such as separation, maturation, independence, and ending.

The program started two months before the end of the year-long program. Two large acclimatization cages, holding four injured young falcons that had fallen from their nests, were brought to the school. The group members were to treat, rehabilitate, and reintroduce these birds into nature.

Using Drama Therapy's distancing principle, the therapist chose to bring to the group a story that parallels the one that they were dealing with, presenting it from a distanced and metaphoric 'story making' position (Gersie 1997; Jennings 1998a; Landy 1996; Megged 2001). This way of presenting the story enabled the participants to touch and process their own personal issues without becoming threatened or confronted. In addition to the treatment of the birds, which included feeding, cleaning, and caring, nesting boxes were built and placed in the nearby nature reserve. The purpose of the nesting boxes was to provide the mature falcons a secure nesting place and also to allow the participants to see and stay in touch with the birds. This narrative was chosen due to the need to find and work on the group's lowest common denominator in a way that would touch and access each participant in the program. The methodology of the work was designed in a way that incorporated elements from "The story you need to hear now" (Lahad 2001), a technique that uses universal truths and hypnotic principles with elements of Megged's (2001) approach in which the therapist writes a unique, therapeutic story for his/her clients, a story that he or she tells them in a specific time in the process.

The story touched metaphorically and analogously on the following issues:

- (1) Young birds falling from their nests – abandoned/neglected children
- (2) Injured young falcons – special needs/angered children
- (3) Young falcons which were taken out of their natural environment and placed in large cages to be rehabilitated and later on reintroduced – special needs/injured children who were taken away from their peer environment and placed in a unique and safe environment in order to improve their well-being and, in some cases, rehabilitate them and hopefully allow them to integrate into the 'normal' society and environment.

(4) Building nesting boxes – introducing the issues of home, parenthood, and foster parents.

(5) The reintroduction of the birds – maturation, the beginnings of independence, separation, the conclusion of the therapeutic work, and parting from the therapist.

In addition to the concrete work that was done with the falcons, the work also included elements of Drama Therapy which were integrated in order to allow emotional expression to assist in the processing of the personal and group issues that

⁵ A therapeutic-educational program that was carried out in 2002, at Renanim school (in the north of Israel) for children with learning disabilities.

were dealt with through the work with the birds. At the end of the process, after the strengthening of the birds, a special reintroduction into nature ritual was held in the nature reserve, in which all the school children, parents, and teachers participated. During this very exciting program, the participants learned to cope with complex issues, developed their ability to see, identify, and be empathetic to others, and learned about nature conservation values and ecology in an experiential-personal way.

At the end of the year, a positive change was observed in the participants and their general behavior, as well as in their self-esteem and self-perception. In the personal intakes conducted at the beginning of the year, each child was asked the following question: "If you were a bird, where would you live: in the cage or in nature?" The answer of the majority was in the cage. At the end of the year, the same question was asked again. This time all of them wanted to live in nature, except for two, who wanted to live in an intermediate zone in which the cage door can stay open allowing free movement between the protected enclosed environment and the open space of nature.

An important element of this model and one of the basic principles of all Nature Therapy is the three-way relationship between client, therapist and nature. In the example described above, the therapist addressed the independent and dynamic behavior of the bird, and used it as a trigger and catalyst in the therapeutic process. This approach encourages the therapist to take yet another step back and allow the 'specific elements of nature' to raise their voice in the relationship of client- therapist-nature, taking a more active part in the shaping of the process. This element can be illustrated by another example from the previous case study: After the birds gained strength, they were about to be released back into nature in a reintroduction ceremony. At this ceremony, when the cage door opened, one of the falcons stayed in it, 'refusing' to leave. This event, which was received in quite a dramatic way by some of the participants, triggered them to voice their fears regarding their own maturation process and their upcoming move from the protected institution into the real world. This issue was raised again and received another angle of processing when one of the birds, upon release, was harassed by a raven. In some respects, this process can be addressed from the Drama Therapy and narrative perspectives, relating to the birds as objects who provide projections and opportunities, and whose treatment offers a stage for the participants to experience, reflect, and rewrite their life stories in more effective, satisfying ways. From another prospective, through the eyes of Nature Therapy, one can also see a special story about coping and maturing, which is shared by the children and the birds alike. One can also notice the healing aspects of the trio-relationship of client-therapist-nature. The model also presents a unique approach to the clients, offering them to take the role of a 'therapist,' seeking ways to help others.

Nature Therapy – An Integrated Approach

In the previous sections, the four models of the Nature Therapy approach were presented. Each one of them was described and characterized separately, presenting their independent techniques and orientation. The paper also explored some of the different ways that each model relates to the main concepts of Nature Therapy: the developmental nature-human relationship axis, the being-doing axis, and the concepts of sacred space and rituals (see table 1). Another way to categorize these models is by looking at the first two models (Nature-Adventure and Art with Nature) as being developed out of other disciplines, which can take place also indoors. In comparison,

the third and fourth models (Building a Home in Nature and Conservation Therapy) are totally dependent on nature for their execution. It is important to emphasize that when taking the first two models 'out' to nature and working with them according to the Nature Therapy approach, some basic elements of them transform, due to the change of the setting, the attitude towards it, and the process (sacred space, three-way relationship). Another, third division can be made by addressing the first three models as 'nature for the benefit of humans,' all carried out in a way that uses nature for the client's healing process, working on a one-way axis, while the fourth can be seen as 'humans for the benefit of nature', carried out through the caring and helping wild animals and/or habitats.

Table 1

Model	Theoretical basis and techniques	Therapeutic orientation and focus	Attitude towards nature
Nature – Adventure	Adventure and wilderness therapy	Physical adventures and challenges. Task-oriented.	Setting, tools, provisions.. A place to encounter and confront fears. Challenge
Art with Nature	Drama therapy, narrative-psychology, shamanism (anthropology)	Creative –dramatic process. Process – narrative orientation	A stage, analogous sacred space. A live metaphor an partner in the journ A story in the background.
Building a Home in Nature	Unique	Narrative-creative-physical process. Real and metaphoric at the same time	A home, safe place. Belonging and interdependence
Nature Conservation	Unique	Process- narrative and task-oriented. Humanistic approach. Nature conservation. Community work elements.	A real partner, Someone/somethin to give to

The Nature Therapy approach is an integrative one. In practice, the integration is composed of the four models or of specific elements from them, in the way that will be most supportive for the needs of the specific group or client.

Although each model possesses unique characteristics, techniques, and orientations, and therefore answers specific therapeutic needs and aims, the overall orientation of the approach is to combine elements from each of the four models, in a way which will enlarge and support the specific therapeutic process.

Generally speaking, the Nature Therapy approach relates each therapeutic process as a journey or ritual that should be designed specifically for each client or

group characteristics and needs. For example, a working process in the first model, 'Nature Adventure,' can be facilitated in its 'adventure' orientation and yet be built on a narrative approach, combining rituals and artistic work. In this way, the adventure program can be designed and delivered within a context of a story of an adventurous journey, in which the participants are called to go on a specific mission (which is relevant to the purpose of the specific work) completion of which includes facing and coping with various challenges. The journey may include rituals and artistic work that are designed to support the participants in their journey and to assist them in processing their experiences. This modular and integrative manner can help the therapist stay focused around one axis of counseling orientation (adventure, art or building) and at the same time give it more color and depth by integrating elements from other approaches and techniques.

Summary and Conclusions

The present article introduces the innovative Nature Therapy approach, placing it in relation to drama Therapy, Adventure Therapy and Narrative psychology, focusing on its practical therapeutic aspects. The article does not go in depth into some of the approach elements, namely, nature's potential to serve as a "sacred space" and use of rituals to support the process, the healing elements of nature, and the three-way relationship of therapist–client–nature. It also does not go into the issues of the ethics of the unique setting and does not go into few Ecopsychology concepts which are imbedded in it. It is intended to address these important issues in a subsequent article. Examples from practice are given to illustrate the approach, hoping to help the reader get some sense and feeling of what it looks like in practice. In addition to the concrete presentation of the Nature Therapy approach, the article also presents a new, emerging concept in therapy. This new, yet ancient concept comes out of the times when people were living in communities in nature, at a time when the Shamans used to hold various rituals and journeys in nature to support the healing and transformation of individuals and communities.

According to this innovative concept, therapy takes place in a universal place that does not belong to the therapist or client, a place that is built together, different and separated from the 'real world' but yet not isolated from it, remaining open to it, inviting contact and connection.

The Nature Therapy approach seeks to work in cooperation with natural forces, relating, in addition to the classic inner-personal and inter-personal also to issues such as the relationships with the culture and nature, spirituality and meta-physicality.

It may be useful conclude with a few questions that emerge from this approach and echo other approaches to therapy, leaving the article open, inviting a debate and dialogue around the issues it touches:

- (1) What/where is the place of community, culture and nature, art therapies?
- (2) What/where is the place of spiritualism and meta-physicality in therapy?
- (3) What (does it mean to work in a space that lacks external borders and does not belong to the therapist or client (or, in contrast, a place that belongs to and is owned by the therapist)?
- (4) What does it mean to work in a dynamic and live space, which the client and therapist do not control (or, in contrast, to work in a totally controlled one)?

(5) What do these issues mean regarding the setting, the process, and the role of the therapist in them?

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)

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2.3 Going on a Journey: A Case Study of Nature Therapy with Children with a Learning Difficulty

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Abstract

Therapy is usually described as an indoor activity, centering on verbal dialogue between therapist and client/s. Based on a qualitative study conducted with a group of children with learning difficulties, this article presents a way in which therapy can take place creatively in nature, which serves not only as a therapeutic setting, but also as a non-verbal medium and partner in the process. Using participants' voices to highlight the programme's protocol and impacts, the article presents elements from the innovative framework of Nature Therapy, offering practitioners concepts and methods that can be incorporated into their practice.

Introduction

Most classical methods used in psychotherapy are based on cognitive, verbal, and/or symbolic means and are not well suited to children with late development or learning disabilities (Berger, 2006; Butz et al., 2000; Nezu & Nezu, 1994). Such clients often experience difficulty with therapies that focus on cognitive channels and neglect physical, social, and imaginative mechanisms (Berger, 2006, 2007). As part of the growing use of art therapies with these populations, to work through creative experiences by using nonverbal and non-cognitive methods (Berger, 2006; Polak, 2000), an innovative framework has been developed for working in creative ways where nature is both the setting and a non-verbal partner in the process.

Drawn from a larger research project, the present article includes the facilitator's voice to highlight the protocol of the programme and the potential impact creative methods, rituals, and direct contact with nature has on the therapeutic process of such children. The article challenges some basic assumptions of conventional psychotherapy, while seeking to broaden them to include additional dimensions.

The article begins with a short presentation of the innovative Nature Therapy framework, the Encounters in Nature programme, and the methods that underpinned the study. This is followed by a description of the programme and the results of the research, incorporating participants' voices to highlight different elements. The concluding discussion includes some recommendations for future work in this field.

Nature Therapy: An Innovative Framework

Nature Therapy is an innovative, experiential, therapeutic framework that takes place in nature. It seeks to broaden the static, constantly controlled, environment of therapy (Barkan, 2002; Bleger, 1967) to create a dynamic therapeutic environment (setting) that is a partner in shaping the process (Berger, 2007; Berger & McLeod, 2006). In this new field, concepts and methods are being developed to create a dynamic and open environment, using nature's healing elements to support therapeutic processes, and discovering additional dimensions (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Nature

Therapy integrates elements from art and drama therapy, gestalt, the narrative approach, eco-psychology, transpersonal psychology, adventure therapy, shamanism and body–mind practices. The approach is based on the author's personal and professional experience, as well research designed to conceptualize, analyze, and further develop it. It has been implemented with individuals, groups, and families in the private, educational, and health sectors in Israel. Training is provided in several academic institutions in Israel and is currently being developed in Europe. This article presents some of the concepts and methods of this innovative framework, using a case study to illustrate them and offers ways for their implementation in practice. Due to space limitations, a full presentation of the framework cannot be included. (For an in-depth and detailed description and all case studies, see Berger, 2007).

Setting the Scene: Encounter in Nature – a Nature Therapy Programme for Children with Special Needs

'Encounters in Nature' is a therapeutic educational programme developed by the Nature Therapy Centre and adopted by the Israel Ministry of Education. The programme is conducted in schools for children with learning difficulties and/or special needs. It operates in natural spaces within or near school grounds (small groves, parks, or gardens) for two hours a week, throughout the school year. The programme is facilitated collaboratively by a therapist and a teacher, who has participated in a week-long training course that taught the programme's basic theory and methods. The facilitators receive bi-weekly supervision in a two-hour Nature Therapy-oriented session. Since the programme's founding in 2002, it has been employed with hundreds of schoolchildren from the entire special-needs spectrum - developmental delays, autism, learning difficulties, ADAH, ADD, severe behavioural and emotional (psychiatric) disorders. The case study described below is taken from this national programme.

Aims of the Programme and Research

The main aim of the programme was to help the children adapt to their new school and internalize its norms of behaviour, while developing non-violent communication skills. It also aimed at improving their ability to work as a group, to strengthen their self-esteem and expand their life experience and overall perspective. The research that accompanied the program was part of the author's Ph.D.; conceptualising and developing the Nature Therapy framework. It seeks to connect practical experience and theory-generation, and to use the latter to influence the further implementation of programs. It used an Action Research strategy, integrating Grounded Theory principles informing the construction of theory. Reflexivity was also incorporated to highlight ways in which the researcher's standpoint may have influenced the research and its outcome.

The case study '**Going on a Journey**' aimed specifically to explore therapeutic and educational influences that Nature and specific Nature Therapy oriented interventions may have on these children; i.e. to see what personal and group issues were triggered and/or supported and to explore specific ways that nature and nature therapy may have impacted them. Based on the grounded theory analysis of

participants' experience, this evidence was used for theory construction and for further development and implementation of programs.

Method

Data was collected based on established principles of qualitative research and case study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; McLeod, 2002; Yin, 1984), using open-ended questionnaires that were distributed to the group facilitators after the training (just before the programme began) and at the end of the year-long process. The second set was used as the basis for a three-hour interview, in which the participant was asked to reflect upon the year's process. In addition, routine process logs were analyzed in order to broaden the data. In order to generate concepts, the data was analyzed using Grounded Theory techniques; they were coded into meaning units aimed at generating a theory (McLeod, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). After the data was analyzed, a draft paper was sent to the group facilitators for their reactions, which were then integrated in the writing of this article. This process, connecting theory generation with practical experience, researcher and practitioners related to basic principles of Action Research (McLeod 2002; Reason 1994) insured the trustworthiness and ethical maintenance of the research. This relates to Brydon-Miller's saying about Action Research, which claimed that it *"goes beyond the notion that theory can inform practice, to a recognition that theory can and should be generated through practice, and that theory is only useful insofar as it is put in the service of a practice focused on achieving positive social change"* (Brydon-Miller 2003: 15).

The real names of the facilitators have been used; the children's names have been altered to protect their privacy. The researcher had no direct contact with the children; the facilitators were the only research participants. The Israel Ministry of Education (which ran the programme) and the ethical research committee of the researcher's university approved the research and its procedures.

Setting the Scene

Galim is an elementary school for children with learning and behavioural difficulties, located in northern Israel. The children who attend Galim represent a wide range of diagnoses, involving learning, emotional, social, and communication difficulties, usually accompanied by behavioural problems. The programme took place in a class consisting of nine boys and two girls, aged 7 - 9, all in their first year in this school. The programme was administered in the natural territory of the school, including a small grove and a wide, grassy space. It was facilitated jointly by Yara Shimson, a 42-year-old therapist, who incorporates animals into her work, and Ayelet Kan-Levi, a 33-year-old homeroom teacher, who specializes in working with children with special needs. The work was supervised by the author.

An Overview of the Year's Programme

In the light of the aim of the programme, and taking a ritualistic, perhaps "rites-to-passage" standpoint, the programme was built around a structure of a (fictional) story of a group of American Indian children, about to embark on their traditional maturity journey in nature. During this voyage, the children had to face and cope with physical and spiritual challenges – successful coping would earn them

the respect of the tribe and recognition of their transition from childhood to adolescence.

This choice of theme was based on the approach of using a story as a narrative and metaphoric framework for a therapeutic process (Berger, Doron & Berger-Glick 2006; Gersie, 1997; Lahad, 2002). In this case, the entire journey may be included, placing the process in a larger context that not only defines and normalizes the voyage, but also helps give it meaning. The incorporation of story-making techniques and use of metaphors is consistent with drama therapy concepts of "distancing" and "as if reality". It helps to convey a therapeutic-educational message in an indirect way, without intimidating the group and building resistance (Jennings, 1998; Lahad, 2002; Landy, 1996). Here, for instance, the narrative related the challenges the Indian children met and not those that the participants experienced.

All sessions began inside the classroom. After the facilitators re-told the Indian story and reminded the group of their contract, everyone was invited to go outside and walk in a line (a custom in this school) to the nature room. The opening ceremony took place in this room, which was reserved only for this programme. Using a talking stick, participants shared their feelings and their expectations for the day. Then the group was invited to leave the room and start different outdoor activities. The structure of the opening ceremony was maintained throughout the year.

The purpose of using a ritual was to help the children cope with different transitions within the programme and with vague and uncertain episodes during the process. This is similar to Jennings's (1998) use of rituals in drama therapy: "rituals guide us through changes in a very specific way" (p. 103) and Hazan's (1992) belief that "the purpose of the ritual is to create order within the chaos" (p. 91). Based on these quotes and other references highlighting the potential of incorporating rituals in therapy (Al-Krena, 1999; Berger, 2006; 2007; Grainger, 1995; Jennings, 1995, 1998; Jerome, 1993; Jones, 1996; West, 2000, 2004), the ceremony was used as an organizing element; the repetitions giving the participants a sense of control and confidence.

Yara: "The opening and closing rituals drew a clear line between the educational classroom environment and the programme's therapeutic one. It created order and gave the time we shared a special meaning. The "talking stick" ritual allowed us to keep order in the hectic group, using the known structure of the ritual as an outline for boundaries and authority."

Ayelet: "The ritual created a safe structure in which the kids could express themselves in any way they wished: talking, vocalizing, dancing... Having a clear, well-known ritual freed me from the fear of losing control, of creativity turning into anarchy."

According to the metaphor of the Indian maturation journey, the year-long programme was built in phases. Each phase took place in a different location and used a different mode of work. The idea was to form a cyclic, yearlong journey, beginning and ending in the same place. Seeking to unite the group and help it develop non-violent communication skills, the first phase in the programme focused on challenges and adventure games, using activities such as crossing a river (a winter puddle) or going through a rope-course. These elements were borrowed from adventure therapy, using challenging activities and a task-oriented process to develop communication skills and improve group work (Ringer, 2003).

Yara: 'Crossing the river' (a large puddle made by the rain) was a difficult assignment, as the children found it hard to keep in order and plan ahead. When Ben

was pushed into the water and got quite wet, we stopped the assignment and reflected on it. In the next session, a week later, we tried again. Ben agreed to share his feelings of humiliation while the others listened and asked his forgiveness. This time they kept in line, helping and cheering each other as the bridge was successfully crossed. That was fun."

In the next phase, which aimed to put the children in touch with their strength, develop creativity, and support their individuation process, the work was extended to include creative modes. It included art activities, such as building power symbols and totems, to help the children overcome different challenges on the journey. To help the group take more responsibility for the process, we integrated exercises such as making gifts and preparing food over a fire.

After the group had consolidated and the violence had decreased, we proceeded to the next step, in which a new mode of work was introduced. Remembering the Indian story, the group was invited to build a 'home in nature', a place for everyone to gather and 'be', before the last phase and conclusion of the journey. Using this symbolic yet concrete method, the process of planning, building, and maintaining a home in nature can promote a parallel process of building a safe, personal, inner home (Berger, 2004; 2006; 2007). It enables participants to work on personal and interpersonal issues, such as boundaries, partnership, and belonging (the home location compared with other homes, cooperation in its building and maintenance) and other issues related to the broad psychological concept of home (What does a home include? What is inside and what remains outside? What gives the home strength? What materials is it composed of? What is its relationship with the environment?) (Berger, 2004, 2006, 2007; Berger & McLoed, 2006).

During this phase, a remote and unfamiliar nature space within the school's territory was selected as the group's space. The children marked it off with ribbons, defining its boundaries for themselves and for others who might pass by. The discovery of a cave-like space, under a willow tree on the edge of the marked territory, made the children very excited as they worked together to turn it into their secret group home.

Yara: "This was the first time I could actually see them working together, planning, listening, and taking decisions in a logical and non-impulsive manner. As the place was cleaned up and reorganized, fights gave way to active creation. The children found a carpet, gate, chairs, and ropes, which they brought to create a pleasant and homey atmosphere."

To conclude this phase, a name-giving ceremony was performed as part of the Indian journey. This was a different kind of ritual, aimed at connecting the children to their strength and supporting their individuation process, so that they could be seen and recognized as individuals, within the larger group. Here, each child received a new name, based on a positive characteristic that he or she had displayed during the previous sessions.

Yara: "This was very important, as it gave the children a chance to adopt new, empowering names. Since the names that were chosen, such as Open Sore, Fast Runner and Thoughtful One, were based on positive social behaviour that they had displayed during the programme, it gave the children something to strive for and look forward to."

As the end of yearlong 'maturation journey' approached, the fourth and last phase was introduced. The group was assigned its most important mission: to take care of a pair of falcon chicks, that had fallen out of their nest and been wounded,

until their successful recovery and return to the wild. This mode of work was based on the Nature Conservation Therapy method (Berger, 2003, 2004, 2007; Berger, Doron & Berger-Glick, 2006), in which the therapist tries to match a relevant nature conservation need or project to the therapeutic needs of the individuals and the entire group. Using the story of an animal, landscape, or plant creates both distancing and identification, which can help people unfold and share complex stories, while normalizing their experience and broadening their narratives (Berger, 2003, 2007).

Ayelet: "Two weeks before the arrival of the birds, when we told the group about the project, personal issues began to unfold. One boy asked whether the chicks' father had pushed them out of the nest, while another asked if their mother and brothers missed them and, if so, why they didn't pick them up? Hearing these questions, I felt that the children were finding a way to voice some taboo issues. Although I could not answer them, I felt that sharing these questions with the group had normalized some of their pain and strengthened the children."

Yara: "For some of the children, the idea of setting the birds free was very difficult. Some were sad and angry because they felt abandoned, while others felt guilty about abandoning the birds. Some were worried about their physical survival, while others asked whether they would come back to visit or nest. This episode allowed them to experience and practice endings. Opening the cage door and seeing the birds fly back to nature gave the separation new meaning. Suddenly it all made sense."

Ayelet: "Not only did the rehabilitation project allow them to feel special and capable, but assuming the role of caretaker also allowed them to encounter and process such issues as responsibility and empathy, as they identified with the birds' injuries and vulnerability."

The year ended with a ceremony, in which the group hosted all the school's pupils and teachers for a special event, in which the children retold the story of the journey and returned the healed birds to nature.

Results

Three major categories emerged from the grounded theory analysis, each containing several sub-categories:

1. Issues related to nature

- a. The influence of nature on the process – challenging, opening doors, changing situations.
- b. The difference in atmosphere created by nature.
- c. Nature as supplier of materials.
- d. The children's attitude to nature.
- e. Other issues

2. Issues related to group and individual process

- a. Strengthening self-esteem and confidence.
- b. Group-building and development of positive communication skills.
- c. Processing personal issues regarding parenthood, anxieties, death and abandonment.
- e. Developing responsibility.

- f. Developing the option of planning (as opposed to impulsive action).

3. Issues related to other elements

- a. Training and supervision.
- b. The use of rituals to support the process.
- c. The personal process experienced by the facilitators.

In light of the scope of the present article and space limitations, the discussion of results focuses on the first two issues only. For a full analysis, see Berger, 2007.

Nature's Role and Influence on the Process

Analysis revealed that the incorporation of nature had a strong influence upon the process. One of the most prominent results was the way in which the independent dynamic of nature influenced and shaped the process.

Yara: "As we were organizing and cleaning the 'home' (the cave-like space) one of the kids found a centipede. This caused a panic: the kids shouted and ran all over the place. After I caught the centipede and calmed them down, they agreed to look at it from a close distance. Then, as we released it, a spontaneous fear-coping ritual took place. The next time we found a centipede, there was hardly any hysteria.

Ayelet: "Planning the activities was complicated, as we never knew exactly what to expect. There was always the fear that we would wake up on the morning of the activity and be faced with heavy rain in winter, or a heat wave in summer. This made it very demanding: it challenged us to be creative and alert, to be ready to invent relevant activities that would suit both the group and the weather. Working in this uncontrolled setting evoked options for activities that we had never thought about. For example, one rainy day, we accepted the group's suggestion and walked together under a big plastic sheet, to keep ourselves dry. This was funny and enjoyable, and at the same time it required group cooperation, leadership, physical intimacy, and creative thinking."

These variable situations, dictated by nature, created special circumstances, in which the counselors and the children shared an ever-changing environment that was not within their control or ownership. It appears that this was one of the most significant elements of the process, as it raised the issue of coping with the uncontrolled and unexpected; promoted flexibility and expanded coping mechanisms. The independent dynamic of the setting challenged not only the participants, but also the facilitators, raising the question of whether this 'uncontrolled' element should be addressed as an obstacle.

An alternative way to address nature, based on the concept of the three-way relationship of client – therapist – nature (Berger, 2004, 2007; Berger & McLeod, 2006), is to relate to it as a partner in the process, shaping and influencing it in various ways. In the above examples, nature provided an element that gave the group a chance to work on the issue of fear and called for work on issues such as cooperation, intimacy, and leadership.

Another element, emerging from the research findings, was the potential that lies in the qualitative difference between the natural environment and indoor settings.

Yara: "There was a considerable difference between the way the children behaved in the classroom activities and their actions in nature. Apparently, nature raised their level of motivation and cooperation; they played, worked, and created together in a more spontaneous way. It seems that work in nature called for 'creative

doing', which gave our children, who come from wide-ranging experiences of failure, a chance for a positive experience, working and expressing themselves in ways that are not exclusively verbal or cognitive."

Hence nature, as a living, sensual place, evokes work that involves all the senses and communication channels; physical, emotional, imaginative, and spiritual (Abram, 1996; Roszak, 2001). In this respect, Nature Therapy expanded communication channels and helped develop coping mechanisms that improved the participants' overall functioning.

Another element that emerged from research data was nature's contribution as a supplier of materials.

Ayelet: "I remember how they insisted on going on an expedition to collect herbs for tea on a day of heavy rain. In fact, it turned into a bravery mission as they all returned wet but quite happy... I think that this aspect of taking care of basic needs - a sheltered place, a warm fire and herbs for tea - was very important. It gave the children a chance to prove their ability to take care of themselves, by using materials they find in the here and now.'

This finding suggests that nature had a major impact on the process. Not only did it provide the physical space and materials for the encounters, but it also created experiences that allowed learning and development that might have not taken place indoors.

The Process of Group and Individual Development

According to research findings, a meaningful therapeutic process was provided, both on personal and group levels. Apparently, the strongest effect of the work was the development of the children's self-esteem and self-confidence. This achievement was made possible by the empowering approach, which provided an opportunity to succeed and be acknowledged as good and worthwhile.

Yara: "It was very exciting to be with them and observe them during the ceremony in which the birds were returned to the wild. The entire school came to watch, and respected them for their work and their process. It was beautiful to see the way they proudly took the stage, reading out their year-long story, and finally opening the cage and letting the birds fly free."

Ayelet: "Seeing them there, I felt sad and proud at the same time. They were so excited. For some, it was probably the first time that adults recognized their taking centre-stage as a positive thing."

Group Development

Another aspect of the work was the process of group-building, including the development of positive communication skills.

Yara: "At first, they were constantly bickering, using hands and bad language as the main means of communication. Arguments were mainly about their place in the group: who would sit next to us, who would light the fire, and so on. In time, through the adventure activities and the construction of the camp, this sort of behaviour decreased, more positive ways of communicating were developed, and the group began to bond."

It appears that strict maintenance of the contract supported the internalization of collective behavioural norms, while the active physical and creative orientation of the activities helped to expand previous communication patterns into more positive

ones. Another element that contributed to this development was the maintenance session structure and of rituals.

Yara: "The opening and closing rituals were very important, because they provided order and security. The fact that the children knew what to expect gave them a feeling of control and calmed them down."

Another important accomplishment of the work was the development of personal and group responsibility. This was achieved mainly through the design, construction, and maintenance the camp – making group decisions regarding questions such as: What will it look like? What materials will we use to build it? What rules will be kept? Who will be allowed to enter?

Ayelet: "As they were designing and building the camp, I saw them plan and think things through, talk about what needed to be done, by whom and when. This was the first time I actually saw them thinking and working together as a group."

This process was further developed in the work with the birds, as the children were committed to caring and feeding them as well as cleaning the acclimatization cage.

Yara: "Although some of the children were disgusted by the dead chicks (fed to the falcons), they insisted on taking part in the feeding, as this was part of the group's voyage."

Personal Development

Personal learning was also gained, in parallel to group learning.

Yara: "Ron was a poor student, who found it hard to cope with verbal and cognitive class assignments. He arrived in the group with severe behavioural issues. He was not popular, and suffered from lowered self-esteem. During non-verbal and physical activities, Ron got a chance to do something he was good at and, in some cases, even best in the class. In the bridge-crossing mission, he took the role of leader, using his physical abilities to help others. Over the course of the year, Ron changed his position, from being one of the disturbing children in class to being one of its positive and popular leaders."

Ron's story highlights the potential of working experientially in nature as a medium for change. In this case, the qualitative difference between the natural environment and the indoor setting provided a kind of learning that the classroom probably could not have offered.

David's story illustrates another example of a personal learning process that took place during the programme:

Ayelet: "At first, David found it very difficult to cope with the changes that the programme involved: going out of the classroom and entering the nature room, coming out of it into the open space, going back to the nature room, and then to the classroom again. He expressed this difficulty by bursting into tears, or outbursts of anger or aggression towards anyone around. In time, through the insistence on maintaining the structure and behavioural norms, along with the changes that being in nature generated, David learned to cope better. Apparently, the development of flexibility allowed him to let go of some control and to be more relaxed."

David's story illustrates the potential that lies in the approach, combining the maintenance of the contract and the use of rituals, together with the independent dynamic that nature creates.

Concluding the Journey – Summary and Discussion

In its description and analysis of a Nature Therapy programme, this article presents a creative and non-verbal approach, in which nature-orientated therapeutic work can take place with children with learning difficulties. It highlights a way in which such work can be implemented and facilitated by the staff in a school setting, within a natural, semi-urban environment. The article reveals the potential that lies in creative modes of working, in general, and the way in which a direct encounter with nature can support and extend the therapeutic-educational process, in particular. Very little research has been published to date on Nature Therapy, or its application with children with learning difficulties (Berger, 2007).

I am currently engaged in evaluative research on the effectiveness of such programmes with different groups and in various natural settings, as well as the issues involved in designing professional training programmes. In developing this framework, my basic assumption is that nature has resources that can support emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical personal well-being, which in turn can be used for psychotherapeutic purposes (Abrams, 1996; Berger 2007; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Beringer & Martin, 2003; Burns, 1998; Davis, 1998, 2004; Hartig et al., 1991; Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003). I believe that the intentional use of nature as a resource can be effectively integrated into work with any kind of client seeking to develop and heal. In particular, it can help promote the positive health of people with verbal difficulties. I also believe that this approach can help to (re)connect people and nature, fostering love and care for it by means of personal engagement (Berger, 2007). In this respect, the four modes of work included in the programme described here characterize the human–nature relationship aspect of the Nature Therapy framework. It begins with an adventure approach, relating to nature as an obstacle to be overcome, continues on to an artistic approach, relating to nature as a strength-giving partner and addressing it in symbolic and less concrete way. It then proceeds to building a home in nature, relating to nature as a safe place to be in – a home – and concludes with the bird-rehabilitation phase, as the children use their strength to take care of another creature and help nature.

My hope is that as more practitioners develop and disseminate their own ways of doing therapy in nature, a broader set of studies will emerge, facilitating the construction and presentation of a more fully articulated theoretical framework.

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)

2.4 Being in Nature: Being in Nature: An Innovative Framework for Incorporating Nature in Therapy with Older Adults

To be published, in the Journal of Holistic Nursing (JHN) Sage publications

Abstract

This article describes a creative framework in which nature is incorporated in therapy with older adults. Using an example from practice, it illustrates how the integration of concepts from the narrative approach and the innovative nature therapy framework can help older people expand their perspectives, connect with strength and expand their coping strategies, while gaining a wider sense of acceptance and completion in life.

Key words: nature-therapy, narrative, older adults, psychological time, creativity, nature.

Introduction

The medical definitions of health in older age refer mainly to physical symptoms, giving only little attention to the emotional and psychological aspects of the personality (Bar-Tur, 2005; Danhauer & Carlson, 2005; Ryff & Singer, 2000). This attitude is also expressed in practice: only a few training programs for counselors focus on this growing population and health maintenance organizations that work with older adults generally offer few psychological services (Bar-Tur, 2005). In most cases, when psychotherapy is offered to older adults, it takes the form of verbal and cognitive activity held indoors, involving little contact with nature (Bar-Tur, 2005; McLeod, 2003).

A review of the literature in psychology suggests that older adults possess unique characteristics and needs, and therefore a specific therapeutic approach is needed when working with this group. The psychological literature on older age indicates that one of the major challenges in this field is to help the clients accept the past and make choices for the future, while constantly adapting their perspective to the changing reality (Bar-Tur, 2005; Kling, Seltzer, & Ryff, 1997; Shmotkin & Eyal, 2003). This is consistent with Shmotkin and Eyal's (2003) concept of psychological time, which reflects the construction of the self and therefore influences the older person's perspective on life, experience and function and constitutes a key element in any psychological framework that seeks to work with older adults (Shmotkin & Eyal, 2003).

Another element of such a framework should relate to the physical and social aspects of aging, as these shed light on other perspectives that are perhaps less crucial when working with younger populations (Bar-Tur, 2005; Kovacs, 2005). The increasing recognition of this aspect is expressed in the growing number of mind-body group activities (chi-kong, tai-chi, walking, and drama) that are offered in centers for older adults and being incorporated in rehabilitation, nursing and prevention programs (Bar-Tur, 2005).

All these factors are consistent with the concept of positive health, which claims that the involvement of older people in their own lives and their sense of competence strongly affect their well-being, functioning, and happiness (Bar-Tur, 2005; Danhauer &

Carlson, 2005; Ryff & Singer, 1998, 2000; Ryff, Singer, Love, & Essex, 1998). This holistic concept is founded on the belief in the strength of older adults and their ability to make choices, develop, and change (Bar-Tur, 2005; Shmotkin & Eyal, 2003).

Based on the relevant literature, it seems that the above approach corresponds with the holistic and mind–body–spirit orientation of the holistic nursing practice (American Holistic Nurses Association, 2007; Frisch, 2003; Zahourek, 2005). Thus, the present article describes an innovative therapeutic framework that uses creativity and incorporates the therapeutic potential of nature in practice (Abrams, 1996; Berger, 2006; Berger, 2007; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Beringer & Martin, 2003; Burns, 1998; Davis, 1998, 2004; Hartig, Mang, & Evans, 1991; Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003). It highlights a mode of work that can be integrated in nursing and healing processes in general, and with the older population, in particular.

The article draws on concepts from the narrative approach (Freedman & Combs, 1996) and from the innovative nature-therapy approach (Berger & McLeod, 2006), in applying the concept of psychological time (Shmotkin & Eyal, 2003) as a key reference point in therapy with older people. By means of an example from practice with this innovative theory, the article suggests concepts and methods that practitioners can incorporate and further develop in their work with clients. As the framework presented here is very new and not fully articulated, the article also aims to open a dialogue on the issues, inviting others to add and further develop its basic concepts.

The Narrative Approach

Narratives, or life stories, provide a meaningful integration of the events, actions, and experience that have happened to people in the course of their lives (Shmotkin & Eyal, 2003). Listening to the narratives of older adults helps them bridge the past-present and future and develop an identity and purpose in life (McAdams, 1993; Shmotkin & Eyal, 2003). This article refers to a specific narrative approach developed by White & Epston in Australia (Freedman & Combs, 1996; McLeod, 1997; White & Epston, 1990). The underlying assumption of the approach is that the life of each person is led and constructed by a dominant narrative, which is an integration of stories that individuals tell themselves and social and cultural stories that are told by people and communities around them (meta-stories). According to this perspective, the dominant narratives help people find meaning and locate themselves within the larger social contexts. At the same time, the tension that may exist between the individuals and the meta-stories can cause conflicts and psychological stress and prevent them from living authentic and full lives. The framework based on the approach seeks to extend the variety of the stories (so-called realities) that people tell themselves while seeking to select preferred and alternative ones (Freedman & Combs, 1996; McLeod, 1997; White & Epston, 1990). Based on this postmodern approach, concepts such as constructivism and choice, belief in the ability of people to make choices and change their attitudes towards life, the narrative approach helps individuals extend their ability to make new choices and navigate their personal lives within the larger social matrix.

Nature-Therapy: An Innovative Therapeutic Framework

Nature Therapy, which takes place in nature, is based on an innovative experiential approach. It seeks to broaden the classical concept of setting as a static, permanent place under the control and ownership of the therapist (Barkan, 2002; Bleger, 1967) to include the dynamic natural environment as a partner in the shaping of the setting and process (Berger, 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Berger & McLoed, 2006). The developing theory, concepts, and methods of this approach to therapy help it operate in the living, open environment and take advantage of its healing elements (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLoed, 2006) to support therapeutic processes and develop in new directions. Nature-therapy is a holistic framework integrating elements from art and drama therapy, Gestalt, the narrative approach, Ecopsychology, transpersonal psychology, adventure therapy, Shamanism, and mind-body practices. Its development is based on the personal and professional experience of the author, as well as his research devoted to its conceptualization, analysis, and development as a therapeutic framework and practice (Berger, 2007a). It has been implemented with different kinds of clients in individual, group, and family settings in the private, educational, and health sectors in Israel. Trainings are offered in academic institutions in Israel and additional programs are currently being developed in Europe.

The research that examined Nature Therapy's impact upon different populations shows that its creative operation within nature can significantly support people's healing. It seems as if the way it relates to the natural elements within this uncontrollable environment can help people develop flexibility and expand their ability to connect to their imagination and body (Berger, 2007a). These important coping mechanisms may not only help older people deal with the uncontrollable changes that are embedded in their aging process, but also increase their positive health and support their personal development (Bar-Tur, 2005; Danhauer & Carlson, 2005; Lahad, 1998; Ryff & Singer, 1998, 2000). In addition, the connection to the cycle of nature fosters a sense of acceptance and completion, as it links the individual life cycle with the larger universal natural one (Berger, 2007a; Berger & McLoed, 2006).

Nature, Narrative and Therapy with Older People

In combining narrative and nature-therapy concepts, therapists will seek to include nature in the therapeutic process in a way that enables the older person not only to voice quiet stories but also to connect them with stories of natural phenomena and the nature around us (Berger & McLoed, 2006).

In this sense, the case study illustrates a way in which the incorporation of nature in therapy and the connection to the cycle of nature can help older people gain a sense of continuity and completion of life while associating the personal, limited, and linear lifetime with universal and endless time. The article also presents a creative, nonverbal therapeutic form in which the uncontrolled dynamics of nature can be used as a means to develop flexibility and acceptance that can help older people deal with changes in a more satisfying way. Since these elements relate to the holistic aspects of health and care they can be integrated into the practice of the holistic nursing while expanding its relationship with the environment and widening its existing spiritual dimension (American Holistic Nurses Association, 2007; Frisch, 2003).

Between Hope and Desperation, Low and High Tide - Brian's Story

Brian, a 65-year-old social worker, participated in a nature-therapy workshop designed for professionals held in Scotland. The opening session was set between a forest and the beach. The participants stood in a circle, listening to their breathing, the wind, and the waves. When people were invited to say something about themselves and their reasons for coming to the workshop, Brian shared his feelings of sadness, fear, and queries about the future: "Now that my children have left home and are parents themselves and I have retired, it is difficult for me to find purpose and value in my life. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and do not know what to do. I wonder if this is the time to depart and die."

The next day on the beach, after some mind-body activities using elements from tai-chi, chi-kong and guided imagery and connecting the participants with the wave-whisper and sand movement, I suggested to Brian that he take a meditative-walk imagining each step he took in the sand as a chapter in his ongoing voyage through life. I did not limit this journey in time or space, trusting Brian's ability to navigate this journey in nature in the most worthwhile and supportive manner. When he returned from his walk, Brian had a calm expression on his face, as he told the group that he had reached the conclusion that he was not yet ready to depart. When other group participants asked him about his tear-filled eyes, he said that he was sad to realize that a few important cycles of his life had been completed and he did not know how to continue or what to do. In order to explore the subject in a creative, non-cognitive fashion, I offered Brian to continue his earlier work by finding a suitable space within the larger group space that had been formed on the sand, and composing a two-faced sculpture: one side relating to the past, and the other symbolizing the future. I asked him to start by closing his eyes and listening to the mantra of the waves, while letting his imagination take the lead. An hour later, as we walked among the participants' creations, listening to their stories, Brian said, "I really enjoyed this exercise, as I totally lost sense of time. At first, I did not like it since the image of a memorial came up, but then it changed into images from my childhood, when we were playing on the beach and building castles on the sand." When I asked about his creation, he said, "I did not compose anything as I could not control the sand. I tried to build a castle but the sand kept slipping. I stopped and sat down, being present and looking at two sea gulls fighting, watching the tide coming in and the last rays of the sun. It seems this is the first time in many years that I took the time to be – to stop and observe all of this; life is beautiful ..."

Using Practice to Illustrate Theory

Brian's story presents an example of a nature therapy work with an older person, incorporating creativity and contact with nature to support and enrich the process. The present section aims to share some of the theory that underpinned the therapist's choice of interventions, highlighting the ways in which it incorporated concepts of narrative and nature-therapy. The first choice that was made prior to the workshop concerned the location of the first group circle. This choice was guided by the nature-therapy concept of nature as a therapeutic setting using the intermediate zone (Berger 2007a, Berger & McLoed, 2006), a territory between the forest and the beach, in order to evoke the concept of transitions in life and the narrative concept of constructing continuity between its different phases (Shmotkin & Eyal, 2003). It illustrates a way in which nature-therapy incorporates elements from the environment

and landscape to trigger specific therapeutic issues. In this context, the therapist used Brian's narrative to transform psychological understanding into an active intervention in the life span journey.

This choice relates to the concept of the three-way relationship of client-therapist-nature (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006), another basic nature-therapy concept, which calls upon the therapist to extend the classic therapist-client relationship (McLeod, 2003) to include nature as a third partner. This is illustrated by the therapist's choice of taking a step back while inviting the client to use the journey in nature as a time for self-reflection. In this sense, the therapist related to the coastline as a symbol of Brian's lifespan and Brian's footprints as symbols of meaningful episodes in its course. Then, seeking ways to use the impact of the journey to further develop Brian's sense of continuity, trusting the potential of creative and embodied modes of working (Kepner, 1987; Lahad, 2002), the therapist asked Brian to choose a location on the beach and construct a sculpture representing his life journey. The spontaneous play that developed with the sand evoked memories and feelings from Brian's childhood, expanding his personal narrative and helping him engage with his past. In contrast to indoor art therapy modes, where the setting and artistic materials are static and the artist (client) is active, here both are dynamic, as the client does not control the natural surroundings and sand. In this respect, the sliding sand and the unsuccessful building experience led Brian to ask basic questions about the way he deals with uncontrollable changes in his life and the balance between accepting and fighting them. This episode, triggered by nature's independent dynamic, made Brian stop and be. This unique outcome helped him open himself to the beauty of the world around him and reconnect with the aesthetics of the natural world outside. This experience not only helped him expand his perspective on his life narrative, but also fostered a new sense of hope and meaning in his life.

The Paradox of Personal and Cosmic Cycles

In their article on psychological time in older age, Shmotkin and Eyal (2003) argue that "the life course of the individual involves both growth and decline over time [and therefore] human beings are ambivalent in their attitude towards time" (p. 265). They claim that older people focus especially on this issue, exploring how much they have achieved so far and how much they still hope to progress. In keeping with this line, Shmotkin and Eyal (2003) also contend that since time conceptions, and the question of what one does with his/her time may be a key factor in well-being at any period of life, the concept of psychological time is a vital factor that counselors and therapists should consider in any treatment of people facing normal transitions and developmental challenges and with people of older age, in particular. They also say that "older people seek meaning in their past and observe it from the perspective of their entire life" (p. 261). In discussing the ambivalence around the issue of time and how to address it within therapeutic work with older people, they suggest that "time can be viewed as an objective, physical, and quantifiable entity that exists in and of itself and is not dependent on human perception or consciousness. All (human) events are arranged along a linear axis of time. Human beings exist in time." (p. 259).

This issue raises a question about ways in which therapeutic process, in general, and such that takes place in nature, in particular, can help older adults deal with the paradox that exists within this matrix, the personal and cosmic time.

Brian's story illustrates a way in which cyclic natural phenomena, such as the ebb and flow of tides, sunset and sunrise, migration of birds and the like, can be used to connect people with the universal cycle that we are all part of. This mode of work can help older people broaden their perspective of time and gain acceptance of their past, while gaining a sense of continuity and flow. This spiritual attitude does not seek to scientifically explain or delay the maturation or aging process, but rather to help people relate to it as a natural and normal process, while developing a sense of harmony and unification with their surroundings (Davis, 1998).

Summary and Conclusion

This article presents a creative framework in which nature plays a role in therapeutic and nursing work with older people. This mode of work expands the repertoire of common psychological approaches by incorporating spiritual and creative elements in holistic forms of therapeutic and nursing practices, in general, and in therapy with older people, in particular. It illustrates a way in which a dialectic discourse between the personal time-limited life and the endless cosmic one can be used to extend people's perspective and help them reframe their own narratives. In doing so, it highlights a way in which the connection between the personal story and the natural-cosmic one can enhance clients' sense of completion and oneness with themselves and their surroundings. It seems that this approach can be integrated in the holistic nursing practice, using creative methods and contact with nature in order to expand the ways in which holistic nursing can help people engage with their surroundings and broaden their overall concepts of health and wellbeing.

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)

2.5 Building a Home in Nature – An Innovative Framework for Practice

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Abstract

This article presents an innovative framework that uses the natural environment as a partner in a creative and nonverbal therapeutic process. Integrating examples from practice, it illustrates ways in which this fresh theory, concepts and methods can be implemented with different clients and different settings.

Key words: space, creativity, nature therapy, ritual, nature

Introduction

The Issue of Space

In most cases the psychotherapeutic discourse makes it appear as if the therapeutic process takes place in a vacuum with scarcely a reference to the environment in which the process occurs (Barkan, 2002; Pendzik, 1994). Over the last few decades, with the emergence of environmental psychology and other post-modern disciplines, writers have become increasingly aware of different influences of the environment on the individual's general social behavior and counselor-client transactions (Anthony & Watkins, 2002; Barker, 1976; Baron, Rea, & Daniels, 1992; Chaikin & Derlega, 1974; Gifford, 1988; Gross, Sasson, Zarhy, & Zohar, 1998; Hall, 1976; Lecomte, Berstin, & Dumont, 1981; Miwa & Hanyu, 2006; Morrow & McElroy, 1981; Orzek, 1987; Pendzik, 1994; Pressly & Heesacker, 2001; Ulrich, 1983; Ulrich, Dimberg, & Driver, 1991). It has also become increasingly evident that the aesthetics of the surroundings affect people's display of emotions (Maslow & Mintz, 1956) and their overall levels of stress (Miwa & Hanyu, 2006). In addition to the growing evidence of the considerable impacts of urban and indoor environment upon the therapeutic process, more and more writers have begun to explore the impact of natural spaces on parallel processes (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Hartig, Mang, & Evans, 1991; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Totton, 2003). Alongside these developments, together with the introduction of Ecopsychology, adventure therapy, and nature therapy, researchers have begun to write about the ways in which nature and the contact with nature can support the therapeutic process (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Beringer, 2003; Beringer & Martin, 2003; Burns, 1998; Davis, 1998, 2004; Hartig, Mang, & Evans, 1991; Totton, 2003; Roszak, 2001; Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner 1995). However, despite this growing interest, only few have articulated this knowledge into a therapeutic framework that incorporates the relationship with this natural space as the key reference for therapy.

This article aims to illustrate an innovative framework based on and developed from these ideas. Integrating examples from practice, it presents ways in which the new framework – theory, concepts, and methods – can be implemented with different clients and in different settings.

Nature Therapy: An Innovative Therapeutic Approach

Nature Therapy is an innovative experiential therapeutic approach that takes place in nature. It seeks to broaden the classical concept of setting as a static, permanent place under the control and ownership of the therapist (Barkan, 2002; Bleger, 1967), so that it includes the dynamic natural environment as a partner in the shaping of the setting and process (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006). It develops a framework: theory, concepts, and methods that help it operate in this live and open environment while using its healing elements (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006) to support therapeutic processes and develop in new directions. Nature therapy is a postmodern approach based on the integration of elements from art and drama therapy, gestalt, the narrative approach, eco-psychology, transpersonal psychology, adventure therapy, shamanism, and mind-body practices. The approach also includes an environmental educational aspect, using the process with nature as a bridge between people and nature and to foster love and care for the environment (Berger, 2005; 2006). The development of the approach is based on the author's Ph.D research devoted to its conceptualization, analysis, and development. Nature therapy has been implemented with different types of clients, in individual, group, and family settings in the private, educational, and health sectors in Israel. Postgraduate training is offered in academic institutions in Israel and additional programs are currently being developed in Europe.

Nature as a Therapeutic Setting

One of the basic concepts of nature therapy is the view of nature as a therapeutic setting. Nature is a live and dynamic environment that is not under the control or ownership of either therapist or client. It is an open and independent space, which was there before their arrival and will remain there long after they depart (Berger & McLeod, 2006). This characteristic is quite different from the indoor setting, which is usually owned by the therapist, who has furnished it for the purpose of seeing clients and doing therapy (Barkan, 2002).

This situation, in which the therapist does not control the location in which the work takes place, creates some basic assumptions that influence important aspects of the process, such as the therapeutic alliance, hierarchy, authority, and contract. As nature therapy chooses to relate to nature as a partner in process, it invites the therapist to relate to these issues while using a framework that not only takes these characteristics in account, but incorporates them into its rationale.

Building a Home in Nature – Example 1

Joseph was a 12-year old boy, whose life was complicated by communication problems and social difficulties. From the onset of therapy, which took place at the school he attended for children with special needs, Joseph made it clear that he was not comfortable in the counseling room. Instead, he invited his therapist for walks near his classroom. In time, the range of these walks expanded from inside the well-known area of the institution to a nearby, yet unfamiliar, riverbank. As time went by, the boy chose a specific place on the riverbank, under a willow tree, hidden from passers-by. As the therapeutic goal of these sessions was to help Joseph expand his social and communication skills, the encounters began with concrete actions such as brewing tea over a fire. As time progressed, it became evident that he was paying

careful attention to maintaining the exact location, manner, and order of the activities. In addition, it was evident that he was busily collecting sticks and stones from the riverbank to construct a small barrier around the area in which the tea ceremony took place, making sure it was performed precisely in the center. Little by little a relationship between Joseph and his therapist was created through the construction of the barrier, the direct physical encounter in nature, and the repetition of activities and ceremonies conducted in a specific place. A crucial turning point occurred when the construction of the barrier surrounding the tea place was completed. Joseph dramatically expanded his use of language, his desire to connect with the therapist and to tell his own story. Later on, as winter began, the sessions moved indoors to the clinic and the work continued through story making and drawing. When difficult, conflict-riddled situations arose, Joseph would once again lead his therapist to the place on the riverbank, which by then had been named the Home in Nature. It was as though Joseph needed to check and see that the safe sacred space that he and his therapist had physically built together, a space that also symbolized their therapeutic alliance, was still there. It seemed that he wanted to see what had changed during the season and what needed to be reconstructed.

Choosing to relate to nature as a place in which to conduct therapy beckons the therapist to relate to its unique characteristics and choose a framework that will not only take them into account but will incorporate them into the therapeutic rationale. In Joseph's story, the process of choosing a location and later building a home in nature was central to his therapy. It began from the moment the therapist allowed him to take authority over the physical location of the encounters, inviting him to choose not only what to do with it but also where it would be located. This step back by the therapist allowed Joseph to step away from the familiar educational territory of the school to a distant riverbank, where he could encounter and construct a personal therapeutic space. On the site of his choice, he selected a hidden place under a willow tree, in which he created a circle of stones; forming a separate, enclosed territory where fire could be made, relationships built and stories told.

This way of working is consistent with White and Epston's narrative concept of hierarchy flattening (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990), developing it further by inviting therapist and client to construct the space for their encounter together, using natural materials that they find in the "here and now." This mode of working also combines elements from Gestalt and the narrative approach by beckoning the clients to shoulder responsibility and ownership over their own processes. It sends a non-verbal message about the options they have for reconstructing reality from elements that can be found in the "here and now" (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Kepner, 1987; White & Epston, 1990).

Expanding the Alliance

Adventure therapy uses nature to expose the client to a controlled level of physical risk and challenge, for example, canoeing down rapids or hiking through the wilderness. Through this confrontation with nature clients encounter their fears and to expand their coping skills. It is hoped that in this way they will discover new and more efficient ways of coping, for example, by making better use of group support (Beringer and Martin, 2003; Gillis and Ringer, 1999). However, other ways of working with the physical presence of the natural world can also be incorporated into nature-based therapy, thus extending it to additional dimensions.

The three-way relationship between client-therapist-nature is another key concept of nature therapy that can be applied to this process, expanding the classic therapist–client relationship by the addition of nature as a third partner. As such, it is designed to help the therapist relate to nature as an active partner (perhaps a kind of co-therapist), influencing not only the setting, but the entire therapeutic process (Berger, 2004, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006). With respect to this concept, therapists are encouraged to develop specific standpoints. They may take a central position and work directly with the client, relating to nature as a backdrop or tool provider. Alternatively, they may take a quieter role, remaining in the background and allowing the client to work directly with nature, with the therapist as human witness, container, and mediator. What follows is an example of how this concept can be incorporated into nature-informed therapy and can be used to achieve specific therapeutic and educational goals. It also demonstrates a way in which a year-long psycho-educational program can be operated within the limited space of a schoolyard.

Working Within the Three-Way Relationship: Client-Therapist-Nature - Example 2

A class of seven children, aged 8 to 10, studying in a school for children with special needs participated in a year- long nature therapy program. Two-hour sessions were conducted on a weekly basis, facilitated in conjunction by a therapist and a teacher who had participated in nature therapy training and was receiving ongoing supervision. The aim of the program was to broaden the children's communication skills, to build their self-esteem and self-confidence, and to help establish their integration as a group. As the children were not accustomed to the concept of experiential therapy or to the option of working outdoors, the program began in the familiar classroom by inviting the children to look through the windows and observe the changes of autumn. This process was then used as a metaphor to present the new concept of doing experiential work in nature and working with the collaboration of the teacher and the therapist. Having established a safe foundation in a familiar environment, the sessions were gradually moved outdoors, into a remote and unused territory in the backyard of the school. After two months, it became clear that the group was dealing with issues such as independence, behavioral problems, personal boundaries, self-confidence, and self-expression. At this time, the facilitators decided to expand their original aims and address these issues, while remaining open to additional issues that might emerge. As most of the participants had communication and verbalization difficulties, it appeared that the active and creative Building a Home in Nature method (Berger, 2004) would be a good vehicle to support this work and to help the individuation process of the participants. The children did not need many explanations, as they happily joined in this playful and active task. The symbolism that emerged from the home building process was amazing: the home of a

child who lived in a chaotic family had no boundaries, whereas that of the child with an aggressive and invasive mother was surrounded by a wide wall. The home of a new child, who had just joined the class, was built on the edge of the group territory, and the home of the dominant one was built at its center. The concrete symbolism that emerged from this creative work in nature allowed the participants to express basic issues in a non-verbal and creative way, utilizing nature as a mediator.

As winter intervened, the environment changed. Rain and mud took over, plants sprouted, and animals such as migrating birds appeared. These elements intrigued group members who were not accustomed to such direct contact with nature. The blooming of plants and the discovery of earthworms triggered the children to voice questions about the permanency and fluidity of life and about changes they go through as they grow up. In one session, after a particularly stormy day, it became evident that most of the homes were flooded and the ground was soaked through and through.

This encounter with the natural elements triggered participants to talk about their fears of the uncontrollable, including the fear of losing parents in a car accident or terrorist attack. In this sense, nature summoned an event that allowed the group to talk about taboo issues and to touch upon elements not usually addressed in the everyday reality of school. This simple sharing seemed to help participants normalize their fears; acknowledging that their personal fear is also a collective one. As time went by, each child found a specific interest and something to do in hi/her home or in the territory near it. Dan was engaged by the sprouting and growth of a small plant that had emerged from the rock he used to build the boundaries of his home. He was as excited by his discovery as he was overwhelmed by the strength and persistence of the plant as it pushed its way through the hard rock. Dan was worried that the plant's roots would not have enough space to develop and that it would lack the nourishment it needs to grow. Using story-making techniques (Gersie, 1997; Lahad, 1992), it became evident that the plant coping story referred to a traumatic experience in Dan's own life – his separation from his biological parents and moves from one home to another. The encounter with the plant seemed to trigger Dan's reflection on basic questions regarding his own roots and belonging. Along this line, aiming to expand Dan's sense of capability, the plant coping story was used to extend his personal story, focusing on the coping mechanisms and strength Dan found in complex moments of his life. This mode of working combines elements from Lahad's (1992) and White's (2004) approaches of working with traumatic episodes, using the story of the plant to connect the child with his own strength and abilities. Connecting to this real and natural story, present in the here and now, helped Dan connect to a primal sense of continuity and a cycle he shared not only with the other group members but also with the surrounding nature – the animals, the plants, and the landscape.

As winter came to an end and spring arrived, temperatures rose and the soft grass turned into yellow thorns. This independent dynamic of nature triggered the participants to air their discomfort and voice their desire to move from the present location into a new, shadier one. Relating to this uncontrolled and unexpected dynamic of natural space by using the concept of the three-way relationship, facilitators asked participants to reflect upon the seven-month long journey, while acknowledging the possibility of choosing a new territory. During this process it became clear that the participants wanted to design and build a new common home in a different location in the schoolyard. As the participants' responsibility and involvement increased, the group debated their different wishes and the conversation

shifted to the consideration of important questions: How large should it be? Should it be open or closed? Should it remain in the periphery of the school or move to a more central location? Should it be protected from other children and if so, how should this be done? The choice of a new home, this time constructed as a group camp in a small grove at the center of the school grounds, emphasizes the relevance of the last question. Several of the children insisted upon surrounding the camp with a small barrier and symbolic traps to protect it and prevent the other schoolchildren from vandalizing or harming it. As the school was located in a poor and remote area of the city, it seemed like its history of thefts and vandalism had had a strong emotional impact over some of the kids; this action strengthened their sense of capability and security. During the design and building of the camp, the group process was highly evident; even when children expressed different wishes, there no physical fights were witnessed. It appeared that the ability to self-restrain and communicate had been significantly developed, thus providing space for positive verbal communication. It was also clear that a sense of partnership and togetherness had been formed as the scattered group united in one space. As the academic year drew to an end, the facilitators looked for a way to conclude and separate from the process, the therapist, and the space. The concept of "therapy as a journey" (Berger & McLeod, 2006) seemed like a good idea to work with; it could offer a creative way to reflect upon and make meaning out of the entire process. The children accepted this invitation and took the time to wander back and forth between the first location, where they had built their individual homes and the present location with the group "home." During this journey meaningful moments were shared and relevant stories were told. This process seemed to take on a special meaning, as the separation included not only a departure from the group members and the therapist – its "human commonness of (potential) space" – but also from a live and physical home – nature. Although this separation process was not simple, triggering the sharing of uncompleted separation stories between the children and their parents or brothers and sisters, it was concluded with faith and hope. Sprouting plants and migrating birds became the dominant image, reminding participants of the connection between human and natural cycles (Berger, 2003, 2004).

This story, borrowed from a larger case study (Berger, 2006b), presents a way in which nature and the relationship with nature can be addressed as partners in shaping a significant therapeutic-educational process. It highlights moments in which nature expanded the process and opened the door to additional dimensions, which would probably not have been reached without its active presence. The example illustrates a way in which nature can be used as a medium in a creative and nonverbal process. As such, it offers a mode of work that can be used at times when words and cognition may not be the most efficient or useful channels.

This example illustrates the way in which the Building a Home in Nature method can be used not only as an intervention technique, but also as a diagnostic tool. It uses the embodied and concrete figure of the home in nature as a symbol of the clients' respective personalities and the issues that they are dealing with. Applying this concept, the therapist can observe the basic choices the client makes, such as the location of the home, what it contains, the materials used to build it, its state of permanence or mobility, the nature of its borders, its relationship to other homes and the surroundings and so forth. This knowledge can be incorporated with the inherent symbolism into a more profound, overall understanding of the person.

Nature as Sacred Space

The two previous examples presented above demonstrate the concept of nature as therapeutic space. An examination of anthropological literature reveals that the concept of transformative and healing work in nature is not new; it can be traced back to the beginnings of civilization in cultures where people lived in communities in nature. In these ancient times, shamans incorporated nature's healing powers into the performance of rituals and the context of traditional medicine. These rituals, which can be viewed as an ancient form of therapy (Al-Krena, 1999; Grainer, 1995; Jennings, 1995; Jerome, 1993; Jones, 1996; Pendzik, 1994; West, 2004), were used to help people recover from illness, cope with the unknown, and make the transition from one status to another (Eliade, 1959; Evans, 1997; Hazan, 1992; Jennings, 1995; Megged, 1998; Turner, 1986). A specific location was staked out within a larger territory, in order to create an enclosed healing place, protected from the intrusion of evil forces (spirits). The ritualistic space created by detaching a territory from its surrounding milieu and marking it as qualitatively different led to the shamanic concept of sacred space; a healing space par excellence (Eliade, 1959). Various applications of the Building a Home in Nature method highlight the potential that lies in the intentional act of detaching a territory from its surroundings and designating it for a special and unique purpose (Pendzik, 1994; Turner, 1986). Choosing, constructing and maintaining sacred therapeutic space can be regarded as a key element in nature-informed therapy. The act of building a home in nature can be used as a non-verbal method that invokes a wide range of issues and invites clients to use the time spent there to reflect on their homes in the city during the course of their daily life.

Between the Spaces – Example 3

A training workshop took place in the forest near the college. At the opening ritual, people were invited to listen to the sounds of nature surrounding the circle as they reflected upon the concept of home. Then participants were invited to share short stories about their homes by presenting relevant objects from their bags and saying something about them to the other participants in the circle. As the training was intended to present the Building a Home in Nature method, it was then suggested that people go wandering off and choose a place in the forest in which to build a home. Sharon, a woman at her late fifties, a teacher by profession, returned soon afterwards and sat down on an uprooted tree trunk not far from the circle in which the opening activity had been held. "What do you mean – to build a home?" she asked the facilitator. "I don't know," he said "but you have time to find out..." Sharon remained sitting there, doing nothing. After a while as the facilitator visited the scenes of people's work, it was evident that Sharon had shaped a square figure in the pine leaves around the tree trunk she was sitting on. Then she took out her notebook and began to write intensively. After a while, when the facilitator visited Sharon's home for the second time she told him "it is amazing, all my life I wanted a small, square house but my ex-husband insisted on building a big round one. I hate it." When the facilitator asked her to say something about the position and location she had chosen to sit on in the house she said "this tree tells my story; this is what happened to me during our marriage, I shrunk myself and put my dreams in the corner. The complex relationship with my ex-husband managed to chop off many of my live parts; I have become a small, vulnerable woman sitting in the corner of my own life". Then the

facilitator suggested that Sharon use this time in nature to write a letter to the Sharon she had been five years ago, before she got divorced, put it in an envelope, seal it, write her current address and give it to him to mail in a few days time. Sharon said that she did not feel she needed this exercise, as she had already understood quite a lot. The facilitator replied: "I am leaving you with the envelope and you can decide what to do with the time you have left...." A few minutes later, he returned and found Sharon crying. "Thank you," she said, "I have never allowed myself to tell him how angry I am at him (relating to her husband); I have always tried to be polite and nice, so that the children wouldn't hear. This is the first time I have allowed myself to express these feelings towards him, as I wrote him the letter. It remains to be seen whether I should send it to him, send it to myself, or settle for what has just happened." Later on, in the circle, another woman shared the story of her recent divorce when she had moved out of her beloved home. At this point Sharon could not hold back her tears and shared her pain with the group. Using basic drama therapy and psychodrama principles (Chesner, 1995; Jennings, 1998), the facilitator asked Sharon to stand at the center of the circle, close her eyes, breathe, and listen to the sounds of the wind and the song of the birds. Then he asked the group members to tighten the circle and be aware of Sharon's breathing. Shortly afterwards, as Sharon began to move inside the enclosed space, he asked her to tell the group something about the home in which she now lives. "At this moment I feel that my body is my home. After a long time during which I could hardly breathe properly, I feel I am regaining my breath. I feel like the trunk of one of these trees; my roots are drinking water from the ground, my head seeks the sun and I am breathing. The sounds of the birds and the smell of pine leaves remind me of the home I grew up in as a child. I had a beautiful childhood. Maybe I will bring my grandchildren to this place and show them these trees; after all, being a grandmother is also a form of being a home."

This example describes one way in which a Building a Home in Nature exercise can be incorporated into the creation and performance of rituals. This ritualistic way of working, another major nature therapy concept (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006) relates to the basic drama therapy concept of theatrical distance and the principle of the two realities – the fantastic and the concrete (Jennings, 1998; Lahad, 2002; Landy, 1996; Pendzik, 1994). According to these concepts, therapeutic work takes place in the fantastic-dramatic zone, which is qualitatively different from the client's mundane life. The entrance into this fantastic space, physically represented by the stage, allows the client to experience and explore behaviors and roles that may have been hard to explore in his or her real life. The shift between the two realities helps transfer the learning gained from the fantastic zone into the person's concrete life and helps the person make the changes he or she wishes to implement (Jennings, 1998; Lahad, 2002; Landy, 1996; Pendzik, 1994). Sharon's story illustrates a way in which this drama therapy concept can be integrated into the Building a Home in Nature exercise using the distance and separation created to help the person touch and reflect upon painfully close issues. Furthermore, it can help the client link the two spaces, as this fantastic world is simultaneously a real and concrete one (Berger, 2005). In the context of this metaphoric approach to therapy, the example also sheds light on how nature can provide clients with many opportunities for identification; beckoning them to project personal stories upon it. Identification with a natural phenomenon, animal, landscape or plant it helps people emotionally engage with nature and re-establish an ancient connection (Roszak, 2001; Seed, Macy,

Fleming, & Naess, 1988) that has been severed. In this respect, nature therapy joins eco-psychology in offering a practical framework that can be used to broaden people's ecological selves (Totton, 2003) and hone the importance of this basic human-nature alliance.

Last but not least, the example highlights nature therapy's ritualistic mode of working, illustrating its potential in integrating mind-body processes (Berger & McLeod, 2006).

Towards a Conclusion

This presentation of the innovative Building a Home in Nature method has illustrated a framework in which nature can be incorporated into therapy. Integrating examples from fieldwork with new theory, it has demonstrated ways in which this method can be implemented with different clients and in different settings. The article challenges cognitive and verbal ways of working, which may miss important nuances embedded in creative and embodied processes, as well as leaving out populations with cognitive or verbal difficulties. In addition it has posed several questions regarding the use of therapeutic space, the concept of relationship, and issues of hierarchy, authority, and knowledge within therapy. The article has also illustrated the way in which nature-informed therapy can be used as a vehicle for engendering ecological awareness and expanding individual points of view to encompass social and collective perspectives.

At the present time there is little research evidence concerning nature therapy and only a few academic training programs. I am currently engaged in evaluative research on the effectiveness of such therapeutic and educational programs with different groups in various natural settings, and the issues involved in designing further professional training programs. In developing this approach, my basic assumption is that nature contains resources that can support emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical personal well-being, which in turn can be used for psychotherapeutic purposes. I believe that the intentional use of nature as a resource can be effectively integrated into work with any kind of client that seeks therapy. My hope is that as more counselors, psychotherapists, and educators develop and disseminate their own ways of incorporating nature into therapy, a broader set of cases studies and other research will emerge. Ultimately, this will lead to the construction and presentation of a more thoroughly articulated theoretical framework.

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)

2.6 Choosing "the Right" Space to Work in - Reflections Prior to a Nature Therapy Session

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Abstract

This article explores ways in which a nature therapist considers the issue of space when choosing the right setting for a session with a new client.

Drawing upon the therapist's thoughts prior to the encounter, the article illustrates ways in which nature's influence is incorporated into the choice, using this reflection to highlight new concepts. The article begins with a review of relevant theory, to place the issue within the larger context, continues with a reflexive description, and concludes with questions and themes that emerge from the case.

Key words: Nature Therapy, Therapeutic Space, Reflexivity, Nature

Placing Things in Context: A Theoretical Overview

The Issue of Space

Traditionally, psychotherapeutic discourse makes it appear as if the therapeutic process takes place in a vacuum; there is scarcely a reference to the environment in which the process occurs (Barkan, 2002; Pendzik, 1994). Over the last few decades, with the emergence of environmental psychology and other post-modern disciplines, an increasing number of writers have become aware of different influences that the environment has upon counselor–client transactions (Hall, 1976; Lecomte, Berstin & Dumont, 1981; Pendzik, 1994). There is growing evidence that the aesthetics of the surroundings affect the person's display of emotions (Maslow & Mintz, 1956), as well as the individual's social behaviour (Barker, 1976; Hall, 1976; Orzek, 1987; Pendzik, 1994). However, much of this evidence relates to indoor settings in urban environments, mainly built and shaped by humans. As such, the classic (indoor) therapeutic environment is usually controlled by the therapist, who has organized it and furnished it for the purpose of seeing clients and conducting therapy (Barkan, 2002). This status, in which the therapist owns or controls and constructs the location in which the work takes place, creates some basic assumptions that influence important elements such as the therapeutic setting, the therapeutic alliance, and the issues of hierarchy, authority, and contract.

Nature is quite a different environment. It is a live and dynamic space (entity) that is not under the control or ownership of either the therapist or the client. It is an open and independent space, one that has been there before their arrival and will remain there long after they have departed (Berger, 2003; 2006). Many authors have written about the therapeutic aspects of nature and of contact with nature (Burns, 1998; Davis, 1998, 2004; Naor, 1999; Ulrich, 1983; Ulrich, Dimberg, & Driver 1991; Totton, 2003). However, only few have tried to reconstruct their knowledge to create a therapeutic framework using the relationship with this natural space as the key reference point for therapy.

Nature Therapy: An Innovative Therapeutic Approach

Nature Therapy is an innovative experiential therapeutic approach that takes place in nature. It broadens the classical concept of setting as static, permanent, and under the control and ownership of the therapist (Barkan, 2002; Bleger, 1967), relating to the dynamic natural environment as a partner in shaping the setting and process (Berger & McLeod, 2006). It develops a framework: theory, concepts, and methods that assist its operation in this live and open environment while using its healing elements (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006) to support therapeutic processes and open them to additional dimensions. Nature therapy is a post-modern approach, based on the integration of elements from art and drama therapy, Gestalt, the narrative approach, eco-psychology, transpersonal psychology, adventure therapy, Shamanism, and body-mind practices. The approach also includes an educational aspect, using the process with nature as a way to bridge between people and nature and foster love and care for the environment (Berger, 2005; 2006b). The conceptualization, analysis, and development of the approach emerged from the process of the author's doctoral research. Today, nature therapy is implemented with diverse populations in individual, group, and family settings in the private, educational, and health sectors in Israel. Postgraduate training is provided in a few academic institutions in Israel and is currently being developed in Europe.

Nature as a Therapeutic Space

Throughout my experience with therapy in nature, the issue of the working space – the specific natural location choice – has become increasingly significant. Working with different clients in varied environments, at different times of the year and different times of the day, it became clear to me that this factor influences the entire therapeutic encounter, as it shapes the emotional, physical, and imaginary spaces. As such, working in a shaded forest will create a different atmosphere than working in a hot desert, and working on a windy morning on the beach will foster different progress than working on the same beach under the moonlight. Exploring and articulating nature therapy, it became clear that people are influenced by different unique characteristics, including not only their feelings and sensations but also the memories they evoke, their way of thinking, and the metaphors they encounter.

From a constructivist standpoint – one that claims that different people will have different attitudes and relationships with different kinds of nature – I learned that I cannot predict what reaction, memory, or images a person will bring up in any given landscape. I remember how surprised I was to discover the strong impact that this issue has upon the narrative that people bring to the session and its development. In that case, which took place when I had just started using Nature Therapy, I met a new client in a field near my home, a place that apparently contained stories from the client's childhood. Only later did I understand the strong links that connected this space with the stories and dynamics that unfolded within it. This early encounter with the impact of the coincidental choice of space on the process made me understand the important meaning of this aspect, and how considered choice of setting is a crucial part of the planning work of the nature therapist.

Using reflections to highlight theory

Cutcliffe (2003), Reason (1998), Herts (1997), and others have highlighted the importance of reflexivity and reflexive writing, not only as an essential medium for exploring the involvement of therapist-researchers and its influence upon the process of therapy and research, but also as a way to present theories, frameworks, and philosophies from a more personal and engaged perspective.

In this article, I share my own reflective questions about the issue of choosing a working space in any form of therapy that takes place in nature and incorporating it in the process. Doing so, I refer to the nature therapy concept of the three-way relationship: client – therapist – nature (Berger & McLeod, 2006) and to White & Epston's narrative approach (Freedman & Combs, 1996; White & Epston, 1990).

As I write this article from the standpoint of a Nature Therapy trainer and supervisor, my main interest is to raise awareness of the complexity of the preliminary choice of setting made by the therapist, and recognition that this choice can influence much of what takes place in the ensuing process. As such, the article concludes at the phase when the client arrives, leaving the reader only with my subtext: reflections, questions, and thoughts. The full case study will be published at a later time.

A Telephone Call from a Client

I guess that Ruth knew I would agree when she called me asking for therapy. She had heard about Nature Therapy and had some idea about my personality from the time we had lived in the same community. Therefore, she was probably not surprised when I asked her, at the end of that first telephone conversation, where she would like to meet for the first session: in the clinic, at her home, or perhaps at the entrance to the nature reserve near her home – where most of the process would probably take place. As she chose the nature reserve, I asked her whether the path to the graveyard would be a good place to meet, being a clear landmark that will prevent us from losing sight of each other in the vast oak forest. After a moment of silence, Ruth replied: "Yes, the graveyard will be a good place to begin. You know, for me it is not just a landmark – my husband is buried there."

Between virtual and physical, therapist and client, human and nature: Thoughts about the choice of setting

As I had two weeks before the actual encounter, I took time to ponder the meaning and symbolism that the conversation had and the ways in which the specific setting might impact the process. As a nature therapist, I was accustomed to addressing the natural environment as a partner in shaping the setting, and therefore also as a partner in shaping the process (Berger, 2005; Berger & McLeod, 2006). Nevertheless, with all this flexibility, I had never worked in a graveyard before.

As I believe that the setting has a major impact upon the process, in general, and in nature therapy, in particular, I was thinking about specific choices I should make for the benefit of this client. I considered the ways I could create a specific atmosphere that would shape the process in specific ways. In addition, I had doubts about my ability to conduct individual nature therapy after working only in group work for the last three years. As such, I felt that most of my concerns were related to

how the therapeutic space should be constructed and maintained; how it might affect my position as a therapist; the relationship between the client, nature, and myself; the therapeutic alliance; and the process. Comparing my experience in group work with the doubts I was experiencing made me realize that I had learned to construct the therapeutic space in a partnership that included group participants and nature. Reflecting upon this process, it seemed that this matrix allowed me to feel free to change my position within (or outside) the therapeutic space without jeopardizing its maintenance. On a concrete level, I was generally working simultaneously with the two circles: a natural one that I constructed for or built with the group using natural elements from the surroundings, and a human circle that the group members made themselves in correlation to the natural one, by building a circle of stones or standing in one. The physicality of the two circles helped to differentiate the regular space outside it from the therapeutic space within it. Once the sacred space was established, it allowed a delicate dialogue to develop between the circles: the past, present, and future, the body and mind, the individual and the group, man and nature – what I have previously referred to as the cosmic (Berger, 2007)

Coming back to my fears of the approaching session with Ruth, I was not at all certain that this theory would suit the present individual work. Being the only person to hold the space for the client, how could I change my position and in what ways could I include nature in it? I knew that part of what I wanted to remind – and in some cases, teach my clients, was their ability to work with nature without the need of constant feedback, dialogue, or containment from the therapist or the other group members. At the same time, I was very much aware of the important role and presence of the therapist, not only as a witness and container but also as a person with whom to form a meaningful relationship. I was also thinking of the active role that this therapist (and group members) can have, in offering non-verbal (creative, physical) interventions with nature and mediating between the client and nature and between the therapeutic space and the everyday one. Thinking about all of those issues, trying not to overwhelm myself, I wondered what kind of setting to build for the upcoming session, not only in order to provide a safe space for Ruth, but also to ensure that I, as therapist, would feel safe and capable in it. Was it necessary to create an intermediate zone (space and time) between the car park and the graveyard, to get to know my new client and form a basic therapeutic alliance before entering the graveyard and the stories it contained, or should I jump right in?

Making choices

Although our meeting was scheduled for 8:30, I arrived at 7:30. I wanted to have some time to myself, to reconnect to my body and the nature around me, and to move from thinking about the space Ruth and I needed to actually creating one. It was a bright day, after a few rainy ones. The ground was still wet, covered with fresh grass and young violet crocus flowers. Cows were grazing on the other side of the gorge, as a vulture circled above them. What images would this scenery trigger?

After a short walk, I decided to place the mat I had brought with me on a natural lookout facing the gorge. The lookout was located between the car park and the graveyard – a two-minute walk away. It was surrounded by oaks and terebinths, which provided a natural barrier and camouflage from the walking path, while creating a half-closed container for the encounter. The lookout was above a few ancient caves that had been dug out and used for ancient burial. As the caves were

well camouflaged by the oaks, I wondered whether Ruth would see them and if so, how (if at all) they would affect the stories that would be told during the session. Ruth's agreement to meet in the graveyard made me aware of the multiple dialogues that the scenery contained and the way that their presence might affect the session. In this context, I thought about my possible interventions: the grazing cows and the flying vulture searching for a carcass, the burial caves, and the graveyard surrounded by evergreens and oak tress. What was the symbolism between these elements and Ruth's story? What could this landscape and elements unfold and what might they hide? I questioned whether I was using my knowledge of symbolism in therapy in a biased way, dictating the discourse before it started?

I was also uncertain whether I should open the mat and decide about the specific place to place it, addressing questions I had about the right size it should occupy on the ground. I was aware that this choice would influence the physical distance between us and would also impact the young crocus sprouts, which would be squashed under our weight. As I knew Ruth was in her first year of studying clinical psychology and had considered learning nature therapy, I wondered whether I should open these questions for discussion with her, thereby presenting some of the nature therapy frameworks. This would underpin our work, as well as give her some responsibility for the choice of setting and the construction of the therapeutic space she needed. Reflecting upon my own experience as a client and the anxiety I felt before the first meeting with a new therapist, I decided not to overwhelm Ruth with questions and to make these choices for both of us. I opened the mat to its full size and sat down.

When speculations meet reality

At 8:26, I heard a car stop in the car park. It was Ruth. I walked towards her and she walked towards me. Walking down the path together, I stopped near the chosen location, showed it to Ruth and asked her if we could start here. She looked at me surprised and asked: "Aren't we going to the grave yard?"

Discussion and Conclusion

This article presents questions and thoughts about the issue of nature as a therapeutic setting, in general, and about the choice of a space for nature therapy, in particular. Using the author's voice, the article aims to illustrate relevant concepts from the innovative nature therapy framework, in the hope that they will be heard within this reflective story. In doing so, the article also aims to open a wider dialogue, exploring not only the preliminary choice of space, but also the issue of its arrangement and the work within it. As such, it questions some of the ways that adventure therapy relates to nature (Beringer & Martin, 2003), and its inadequate theoretical emphasis on its spiritual component, including the intangible ways it shapes and influence nature (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Davis, 1998; 2004; Roszak, 2001; Totton, 2003). As nature therapy is a very new framework, my hope is that, as more participants develop and disseminate their own ways of incorporating nature into therapy, a broader set of case examples and research studies, and more fully articulated theoretical framework, will be built up and presented.

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)

2.7 A Safe Place - Ways in which Nature, Play and Creativity can help Children Cope with Stress and Crisis.

Establishing the kindergarten as a safe haven where children can develop resiliency

Ronen Berger & Mooli Lahad

Submitted for publication

Abstract

This article presents a way in which the innovative Nature Therapy conceptual framework coupled with creative therapeutic methods can help children develop resilience and support their coping with uncertainty and stress. It refers to the Safe Place program that took place in 110 Israeli kindergartens, helping over 6000 children after the Second Lebanese War. It is based on the Lahad (1993), Ayalon & Lahad (2000) BASIC PH integrative model of resiliency, highlighting the importance of the kindergarten in such development and challenging the tendency to use the kindergarten as a deductive, preparatory course for school and schooling only. The article integrates theory with examples from practice which can help readers incorporate them into their own work.

Introduction

The Second Lebanese War, the shelling of rockets, terrorist attacks and other stress factors challenged the resilience of the children of Northern Israel, forcing them to cope with the effects of political uncertainty and the security situation in the area, as well as with the overall uncertainty and stress that life may involve.

There are several fundamental questions that should be asked before embarking on the subject of the role of kindergarten in the process of coping and recovery of children exposed to war:

What role does the kindergarten play in providing tools for coping with such difficulties? How can the kindergarten teacher help children develop their resiliency and assist them to cope with uncertainty and crises?

This article offers a perspective that acknowledges the importance of the imagination, the body and the group as key components in developing a child's resiliency and the significance of the kindergarten and the kindergarten teacher's central roles in its development. It refers to the Safe Place program, a Nature Therapy program designed and used after the Second Lebanese War in dozens of kindergartens in northern Israel, with thousands of children. This article will present a Nature Therapy oriented resiliency model ways as applied to kindergartens. The article includes a theoretical background, references to studies and examples of the application of the program in the field. We believe that based on the 'Israeli example', the model, with some cultural adaptation, can be implemented in similar situations around the world.

Resiliency

Ozer (2003) argues that almost 50% of the Americans will suffer traumatic incidents in their lifetime, however very few will develop PTSD. This statement suggests that humans are resilient. Lahad (1993) suggests that everyone is born with mechanisms that help them to cope with complex situations, entailing pressure and uncertainty. Not everyone can handle their troubles and difficulties all the time, but the vast majority does.

This explains why most people who have undergone traumatic experiences, such as war, abuse, loss, etc., are able to resume normal functioning and lead a relatively normal life. These abilities are called resiliency. They are the resources that help people regulate disturbing emotions and adjust their reactions to the new reality (Lahad, 2008). According to The BASIC PH resiliency model, developed by Lahad (1993) and Ayalon & Lahad (2000) there are six modalities/channels that constitute resiliency: Beliefs, Affect, Social Functioning, Imagination, Cognition and Physiology. The unique, individual combination of channels helps people cope effectively with stressful situations and lessens the chances of developing psychopathology as a result of exposure to traumatic incidents⁶. The primary use of the cognitive channel assumes that it may help the person understand his/her experience and find a suitable logical solution. However, this will not necessarily soothe his soul and/or alleviate the physical symptoms that might occur as a result of the traumatic experience, as the emotional memory of the traumatic experience is stored in the right hemisphere of the brain, responsible for emotions, sensations and imagination. In order for healing of trauma to take place, the treatment of symptoms will also require emotional and physical expression. Using the physiological and emotional-affect channels can help unload residual hard feelings left from the experience and extract new meanings from it (Lahad, 2006). For this, the individual's ability to use the social channel is very important because without it s/he will not be able to share his/her experience with others, which could result in feeling lonely and helpless. Innovative studies such as the one carried out by Kaplansky (2008), emphasize the potential for coping and recovery in employing the language of imagination. This channel allows one to create an alternative–preferred reality, described by Lahad (2000a) as the Fantastic Reality, which may contain the most effective strategies for coping with impossible situations such as loss and bereavement. Lahad's model and research (Shacham & Lahad, 2005,) reveals that each person has a unique coping mechanism composed of a combination of the languages most accessible to him, the BASICPH. The more languages one is able to articulate, the greater the ability to cope with changes, and the ability to prevent the development of distress and traumatic symptoms (Lahad, 2002). According to the BASICPH prevention model, the task of developing resilience does not focus solely on the ability

⁶ In this article we distinguish between post traumatic stress disorder and a traumatic experience. The former, (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder consisting of psychological-physical-social clinical symptoms. A person continues to experience a crisis even long after it is over, as if it is going on in the present. PTSD symptoms harm one's functioning and the quality of his life in general. The latter, the traumatic experience is a normal reaction phenomenon that one experiences after a crisis event. The symptoms are supposed to disappear within two to three months. If they do not, one might suspect post trauma (Lahad & Doron 2007; Noy 2000).

to acquire more languages. A person can benefit by expanding one's existing coping channels/languages. It is in fact the strengthening of existing forces and expanding flexibility that will contribute to coping with changes. It is important to emphasize that the task of this project as a primary and secondary prevention is to help children develop resiliency. It does not replace post-trauma-focused therapy such as EMDR, PE, SE, SEE FaR CBT or others. Moreover, there are suggestions that developing resiliency may prevent the evolvement of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Lahad,1993; Lahad, Shacham, & Niv, 2000).

Is it possible that modern life and educational system diminish resiliency?

It seems that along with the immense developments that the modern world has to offer, its improvement of the quality of life and scientific-technological abilities, it also diminishes many important resiliency indexes, mainly the affect-emotional, physiological-physical, imaginational and social channels. When our children are six years old we send them to school, an institution whose main goal is to develop the cognitive channel, believing it will further the child over the course of his/her life, and make it possible for him/her to successfully fit into academia and the work force. Most schools ask children to sit quietly on chairs (restricting the physiological channel), in rows or by a computer (diminishing the social channel), and to give specific, correct answers to logical questions (reducing the imaginational and affect-emotional channels). This can also be the reality at home. It is not uncommon to hear a parent tell his/her four year old child to stop crying because "boys don't cry" or to tell his/her daughter to "quit talking nonsense" when she asks about fairies and dragons (restricting the imagination). In addition, must note the busy daily schedule of most parents and the dying essence of neighborhood community, as well as the development of the virtual media. All of the above, can create a situation in which the child spends his/her afternoons at the computer or watching television, avoids playing creatively and interacting socially (restricting the social, emotional-affective, physiological and imaginational channels). The results of an up-to-date study accompanying the Safe Place program, suggests that schools in Israel not only do not develop resiliency, but on the contrary, diminish it (Berger, in preparation). A critical view of what is occurring in the kindergarten system in Israel reveals that they, too, are influenced by technological progress. It seems that educational standards trickle down into the kindergarten, which is required to amplify its didactic-scholastic demands. At the moment, it seems as if the kindergarten has become an elementary school preparatory course (Snapir, 2008) and not a space where the child can develop in accordance with his age, with spontaneous playing and creative research as its very center (Winnicott, 1996; Levin, 1989, 1999).

If the above is taken into account, it would seem that very limited channels are officially opened and encouraged by the system when a child or her caretakers, who were exposed to the war, need to process their experience. The "standards in education" and the achievement indicators employed by the Ministry of Education in Israel, and most probably in almost all western states, dictate a fixed, highly cognitively-oriented syllabus. Despite this top-down policy, which I wish to dispute and warn against, it seems that most kindergartens in Israel still allow children to express emotions, to imagine, to be alone and with the group, and to play. Thus, the kindergarten teacher and the kindergarten contribute to the process of developing resiliency in children.

Nature Therapy

As technology has developed, we have moved away from nature. We shifted from mystical, religious, tribal life in reciprocity with nature, to an individualistic, capitalist, urban one. We moved from traditional therapy methods, centered on the mutual beliefs expressed in group rituals through dance, drama and music, to scientific approaches to recovery, which focus on rational explanation, understanding and words. The Shaman was replaced by a doctor or a psychologist and the elderly tutor by a kindergarten teacher or schoolteacher. A superficial glance reveals that in the race after progress and modernization we have lost basic important knowledge (Berger, 2008; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Plotkin, 2005; Roszak, Rust & Totton, XXXX). Furthermore, some of today's children do not know that the source of the chicken nugget was a chicken living in a field or chicken coop, and not a plastic container taken out of the refrigerator in the supermarket. This psycho-social reality can explain the spreading of phenomena such as loneliness, alienation, depression (Berger, 2008; Berger, Berger & Kelliner, 1974; West, 2000), and the collective search for meaning, such as the widespread overseas trips taken by many Israelis after their military service. This process clarifies the attraction of the New Age and its penetration into the establishment; from holistic approaches to therapy and teaching, to the development of health products carrying the slogan of being in tune with nature (Berger, 2008). It seems that despite material abundance, we are discontent with our bodies; nevertheless something calls us to re-connect to body, to spirit, to our soul, to the earth...Nature invites us to make room for the child within, those parts of us that feel, imagine and are present in the experience of playing. Connecting to the cycles of nature can help us bond with parallel processes in our lives and to relate to them in a broad universal context (Berger, 2008). An encounter with a migrating bird, a dead lizard or a blooming plant can be a stimulus for expressing a similar story within us, of which we were previously ashamed. Sharing the story can normalize it and impart hope (Berger, 2008). The direct contact with natural elements, the wind, the earth, the plants, can connect us to our body and can awaken the world of images and emotions. Something in the encounter with nature and its powers has the potential to connect us to ourselves; to our strengths and to our coping resources (Berger, 2008; Hartig, Mang & Evans, 1987; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; Korpela & Hartig, 1996; Friese, Hendee & Hendee, 1995; Herzog, Black, Fountaine & Knotts, 1997; Greenway, 1995; Naor, 1998; Russell & Farnum, 2004).

Nature Therapy is an innovative experiential therapeutic framework that takes place in nature. It seeks to broaden the static, constantly controlled natural environment of 'therapy' (Barkan, 2002; Bleger, 1967) to create a dynamic therapeutic environment (setting) that is a partner in shaping the process (Berger, 2007; Berger & McLeod, 2006). In this new field, concepts and methods are being developed to create a dynamic and open environment, using nature's healing elements to support therapeutic processes, and discover additional dimensions (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Nature Therapy integrates elements from art and Dramatherapy, gestalt, the narrative approach, eco-psychology, transpersonal psychology, adventure therapy, shamanism and body-mind practices. The approach is based on the author's personal and professional experience, as well as research designed to conceptualize, analyze, and further develop it. It has been implemented with individuals, groups, and families in the private, educational, and health sectors in Israel. In Berger's definition of the basic

concept to touch nature claims that "through the direct contact and connection with nature people can also touch their own 'inner' nature. One can feel authenticity and develop components of personality and important ways of life that might have been hard to express amidst the intensity of modern life" (Berger, 2005B, page 38). This definition refers to the Ecopsychology perspective of Nature Therapy and to the solutions it tries to give to the distresses caused by technology and modern living (Berger, 2008; McLeod, 1997), while deepening feelings of reciprocity with nature and concern for it.

The Lebanese War – A precedent that highlights the need for a systemic resiliency program in kindergartens and beyond

The Second Lebanese War shattered the routine of children in northern Israel. Expanding the front into the depths of the country, evacuating homes and making them unsafe, the daily experience of rocket hits and burning forests resulted in fear, anxiety and uncertainty, which undermined basic needs for the sense of order, control and safety.

This war was a precedent case, hurting both thousands of northern residents of Israel and nature - the trees, panoramas and animals - all exposed to the same Katyusha rockets and to the same fire that burnt them to ashes .

After 33 days of war, the challenge for therapists as well as for educational staff was to help children and the educational system recover from both personal encounters with the devastation and the destruction to nature that symbolized the war and its long term effects. We convened education and therapy professionals, and thought of ways to turn the collective injury, shared by people and nature, into a safe, recovery or healing process that could enhance the strengthening and establishment of a new sense of safety, thus further promoting resiliency. The result was the designation of the Safe Place program for both staff and kids.

A Safe Place – a psycho-educational program for developing resiliency and coping resources in kindergartens

Stemming from a view desiring to connect the story of the recovery of the forest damaged in the war, with work on developing resiliency, to advance flexibility, normalize bad experiences and give a sense of safety to the children, we created a program that joins Nature Therapy with the BASIC PH model. With the goal of awakening the language of imagination, we focused on the search for a framework story and a healing metaphor that would help children connect with their inner sources of strength. This would replace the memory of the difficult experience, calm them and reduce anxiety; strengthen them and establish a sense of safety. Because the exterior surroundings (the forest) also suffered during the war, we made up a story connecting the destruction of the forest with natural and man-made attempts to recuperate and revive the forest. This is a very tangible, fascinating strengthening process in nature that helps to strengthen the children. This story also makes use of an analogy between the tree, which is a metaphor representing the individual, and the forest which is a metaphor for the entire community (Berger, 2007.)

"Once upon a time there was a forest...

All kinds of trees grew in the forest and a variety of animals lived in it.

In the forest, right between the trees, there was a house of very strong people; they were the forest rangers.

One day a big fire burst out in the forest – huge flames, noise and a big burning heat.

"Careful!" the forest rangers warned the animals. "Fire! Run, hide..."

Everyone waited for the fire to die out, but it was very big.

The burned trees wanted it to end and the animals in hiding wished to return to the forest – to their trees.

But the fire rangers said: "The dangerous fire isn't over yet, it is still forbidden to return."

The forest rangers were very brave. They poured lots of water on the fire and helped extinguish it.

The big noise stopped; only the smell of the fire remained.

"The fire is over!" called the forest rangers. "It is permitted to return to the forest!"

All is safe now!"

*(Taken from the book *The Forest Rangers*, which accompanies the Safe Place program.)*

The book tells the story of a tribe of forest rangers who live near a beloved forest that was damaged by a huge fire that lasted a long time... The story emphasizes the various ways the trees and the animals cope with the fire—those who moved to distant safe woods, those who hid underground and those who got hurt and even died. The story goes on to tell about the ways the forest rangers helped the woods recuperate and recover after the fire was put out. It also relates the exciting meeting with the animals who returned to their forest. This story, which was published as a book with beautiful pictures, serves as a framework for the entire program. As the story is being read, the children play, act and draw the ways the animals coped and through them encounter their own stories of coping. A deer who escapes and does not want to return to the forest meets a buck who misses it. A porcupine looking for refuge finds himself sharing a hole with a skunk. It turns out that despite the differences all have similar feelings and ways of coping...

The metaphor adorns changing characters when, with the help of a dramatic ritual, makeup, and props, the children become the forest rangers. They change from an animal or a plant exposed to fire into a strong, capable character, which guards, protects and is good to others. From this point on, every session will begin with the ritual of children becoming forest rangers, after which they go out of the kindergarten into nearby nature (the forest) in order to build the forest rangers camp. By having the children take actual responsibility to build the safe place, the metaphor and image become tangible and concrete. The weak become strong; victim becomes protector. Later on, the forest rangers build power symbols which help them in their tasks and challenges, whose successful completion enables them to plant young trees and to place nesting boxes and feeding stations for birds. The forest rangers work for the good of the forest and participate in guarding the renewal and continuity of life. At the end of the process, the forest rangers return to their village and receive the blessings and appreciation of their community (the parents and the settlement).

The program was applied as a process of twelve, two-hour sessions, led by an external group counselor from the Nature Therapy Center and the kindergarten's regular staff. In order to provide the kindergarten teacher with suitable tools in the field, to draw her closer to the program's methods and to broaden her view of the process, the program provided supervision for the kindergarten staffs participating in the program. Safe Place is a protocol program, anchored in a reader, which includes both theory and the layout of the sessions. This layout outlines the contents and proceedings of each session and offers ways to adjust them to institutions of children with special needs and/or learning difficulties.

Research accompanying the entire program, shows connecting to the metaphor of the forest rangers; the dramatic acting-out of its characters; going out to nature, encountering and observing changes in it; the process of building the forest rangers camp planned jointly by the children and from materials they find in the field; ceremonies and non-verbal creative work that goes on throughout the program. All these factors helped children develop resiliency, and especially social, emotional and imaginal channels. In addition, it helped children to share painful stories, thus normalizing hard experiences and strengthening feelings of being capable and connecting to hope.

The qualitative part of this study shows that the components of the story and program form a wider effect, which enables the children to project, express and investigate diverse stories and interactions, not necessarily only those related to the war. These stories can involve coping with disease, moving to a new home, difficulties being a newcomer to Israel, violence and parental neglect, loss, divorce, social problems, etc. In addition to the personal benefit of individuals, it appears that the program contributed immensely to the unification of the group, reduced anxiety levels, and lessened the degree of violence in the kindergarten in general. It enhanced the children's self-confidence, their ability to express their emotions, and their capacity to cope with changes and uncertainty. Furthermore, it drew them close to nature and enabled them to get acquainted with it.

Below are some remarks of kindergarten teachers concerning the program, taken from the qualitative section of the research:

L. a kindergarten teacher from Kiryat Shmona: "The main contribution of the program to the children was social and emotional. Choosing a name for the tribe and a site to build the camp on, and later actually constructing it in nature from natural materials they found taught them to cope with disagreement and to cooperate. The socio-dramatic game of animals and forest rangers helped them tell their experiences from the war, to release tension and lessen anxieties."

A. a kindergarten teacher from Tiberias: "The program succeeded in magnetizing all of the children, not an easy feat in our kindergarten...the ritual of wearing the forest ranger's belt helped the children become actual forest rangers! This was evident in their body language; they stretched tall and proud. The mutual effort of collecting boards for the camp taught them to help each other without fighting or using swearwords. The program had a calming and unifying effect on the group."

D. a kindergarten teacher from Tiberias: "The program was very good. Drawing the forest rangers and moving in space in nature; screaming and being physically active helped frightened children overcome their fears and express their feelings. There was one child who, before the program, I scarcely heard. After he was given the role of forest ranger he began to talk and told me what had happened to him in his home and neighborhood. It wasn't always easy to hear..."

M. a kindergarten teacher from Metula: "This is an amazing program. Building the camp in nature, the group games and the rituals we held together taught the children how to cooperate and assume responsibility. Children who were scared to go out of the kindergarten building gained confidence and overcame their fears. It was a very unique experience."

The kindergarten teacher as a key player in the development of child resiliency

As stated previously, children cope with difficulties and hardships daily, at home, in the kindergarten and in their environment. Coping with this reality becomes more difficult when there is an external security threat, which may affect the child's sense of safety and emotional stability, hamper the process of resiliency-building and impair daily functioning. In today's reality, when most children spend more waking hours in the kindergarten than at home, the kindergarten teacher and the kindergarten should play an important role not only in the cognitive development of the child, and in teaching him/her scholastic material, but also in attending to his/her emotional-social-imaginative and physical needs.

Despite the attempt to restrict the boundaries of the role of kindergarten teacher to Education and leave the therapeutic aspects to professionals, it seems that a large part of this important function nevertheless falls upon the kindergarten teacher. This is so because she is the one who interacting with the child; she sees him, creates and maintains the space in which he is active day by day. It is her duty to help him/her part from his mother in the morning, help him/her cope with social difficulties in the kindergarten and bandage his/her wounds, if s/he falls in the yard. Even though teacher- training-programs in Israel include relatively few lessons in the field, and despite the fact that the emotional-imaginative-physical topics are not part of the core curriculum instructed by the Israeli Ministry of Education, it seems that the kindergarten teacher is sensitive to these issues and feels responsible for the child as a whole. It is important to emphasize that the above statement does not imply turning the kindergarten teacher into a psychotherapist or counselor. There are professionals trained in those fields. Nevertheless, the child's uninterrupted and continuous relationship with a significant caretaker implies an important emotional role that the kindergarten teacher has in the emotional development of the child, in general, and at times when the child copes with personal crises and hardships, in particular (Winnicott, 1995). This position does not wish to separate this role from her other ones, but rather to help her develop skills of observation and the emotional ability to pay attention to the language of resiliency in every interaction in the kindergarten. This approach seeks to enable the kindergarten teacher and the child to resume playing in the sand box, make statues out of mud, and build a camp and a tree house.

Elements of the program that the kindergarten teacher can apply in the kindergarten

Previous sections presented the concept of resiliency and various aspects of the BASIC PH model and the Nature Therapy framework, in the context of the Safe Place program. This section will demonstrate selected methods from the program in a manner that invites kindergarten teachers to incorporate them in their routine kindergarten curriculum. A brief description of the method will be followed by a

quote from the kindergarten teacher or the group counselor, showing how it was applied and its impact on the children.

1. The Healing Metaphor: Lahad (2006) maintains that the use of a metaphor can change our inner reality and our conception of the outer reality. Through the metaphor people can experience their world in a new way and thereby undergo recovery processes and the creation of a new and preferable reality (Rosen, 1996). The Safe Place program and the framework story that accompanies it use numerous healing metaphors, chosen specially to help children recover from hard and traumatic experiences and develop resiliency. These are broad metaphors, which invite children to connect to and through them indirectly; tell their stories and compose their means of coping. The dramatic game of being the animals, the trees and the forest rangers facilitates this process, while building the camp in nature connects fantastic reality (in the story) to the concrete reality in life.
2. Building the Forest Rangers Camp – The Building of a Home in Nature model: The Building a Home in Nature Model (Berger, 2007; Berger & McLoed, 2006) is based on the person's need to find and/or create a space for himself, where he can feel safe and protected from uncertainty and/or dangers outside, in nature. The premises of the model claim that the creative, active and concrete process enables therapeutic work on basic issues, as well as on one's relationship with the environment. Defining the place makes it possible for the individual to examine and define his/her relationship with others, his/her place in the group, while the interaction with nature can allow him/her to examine his/her relation to the non-human environment. His/her sojourn in the house, and his/her concern for it, elicit a feeling of belonging to the place and to the rest of the group, who took part in its construction. The process of building the home from materials found in the area teaches the participant that s/he is capable of creating the reality of his/her life in the "here and now." This process gives hope and a feeling of control over reality.

S. a kindergarten teacher in Tiberias: "It was amazing to see Omer, (pseudonym) who was irritable and lonely, change throughout the program and improve her social status in the kindergarten. After we became forest rangers, the group counselor gave her a responsible function of being the ranger whose duty is to bring love and tolerance to the camp and to be in charge of all of the friends in the forest. She said that the forest rangers always looked out for each other and then the children also protected Omer. They helped her avoid a fight, and clean and decorate the camp. Omer learned how to talk to them and became part of the group. The process of building 'homes in nature' was very important, especially because the majority of the children in the kindergarten come from broken homes. Here they had a chance to build a safe place. It helped the personal trauma of each and every child and helped them feel trusting and safe. Building the camp together drew the children closer to each other and lessened violence."

Ch. A kindergarten teacher in a special education kindergarten in Kiryat Shmona: "The children waited to become forest rangers, to wear the belts and carry out the movements that would turn them into forest rangers. Testimony of the healing power of the program was evident last week, when a sick child asked to rest in the

home the children had built. The program was assimilated into the milieu of the kindergarten. This is expressed in the children's request to have their morning snack in the camp, a space that has also become the book corner. They sat calmly in this setting, they didn't call each other names and they listened attentively. I also enjoyed being a forest ranger."

3. Rituals

Rituals play a central role in bestowing a sense of order and safety, and cultivating a feeling of belonging, satisfaction, and control over the uncontrollable (Evans, 1997, Hazan, 1992, Meged, 1998). The application of rituals can greatly help children cope with changes and internalize new behavior codes (Berger & McLoed, 2006; Berger 2007; Berger, 2008). The Safe Place program incorporates various rituals: initiation rituals where, with the help of makeup, props, movements and sound, the children evolve into forest rangers; rituals that help the children make a distinction between the activities of the program that take place outside the kindergarten building and are run by an external group counselor, and the activities in the kindergarten headed by the kindergarten teacher. Another form of ritual can develop skills to cope with change or expand listening abilities. In the speaking stick ritual, only the person holding it can speak, while the rest listen. This form of play expands communication channels, teaches one how to be tolerant and lessens violence. Everyone will hear as long as there is order and they pay attention.

Yael Paran, a group counselor in one of the kindergartens which participated in the program in Tiberias said: "During the speaking stick ritual, the children expressed things that frighten them: 'Mother won't want me any more, there will be another war, I will get lost in the supermarket...' I invited them to all stand up and yell their fears into the center of the circle. They all stamped their feet and made dismissive movements with their hands. Yair yelled, 'Shoo, get lost fear,' and all joined him as his cry turned into a big funny song. I walked among them and called on fear to come out. Slowly, slowly the circle calmed down, and so did the fears..."

Discussion and Summary

This article has introduced one way of using Nature Therapy to help children cope with difficulties, and to establish the kindergarten as a space which develops resiliency. Relating to the Safe Place program, it presented an integrated manner to implement elements from the BASIC PH model and the concept of resiliency in kindergartens, while highlighting the importance of imagination, emotion, the body and social play for improving children's ability to cope with uncertainty, stress and crisis. The article also stressed the importance of the kindergarten teacher in cultivating the children's emotional, imaginative, physical and social abilities and psychological health, and not merely those abilities related to deductive learning and cognitive links.

To accomplish this, it is necessary to establish the kindergarten as not only a preparation course for first grade but also, and perhaps mainly, a space which develops all of the children's resiliency channels, allowing them to express themselves and develop and just "be". Nature's role in the process is crucial; as a space enabling play and relating to the environment, it transmits a message extending beyond time; as

an entity that is larger than us, it represents the eternal and the universal. Another element this article touched upon is the attempt to use this process to empower the kindergarten teacher; the person who has direct contact with the children and has a significant influence on their development and maturing. This topic, as well as the findings of the research which accompanied the Safe Place program will be addressed in a separate article.

This program has addressed issues that are quite important, though not yet treated satisfactorily, in light of the state of security in which Israel currently finds itself. It can also be relevant to other countries dealing with health, stress and the uncertainty resulting from natural or man made disasters.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank and express my gratitude to Viviana Melman and Sarah Horodov for their comments on this article and on the Safe Place program described in it; to all the group counselors and kindergarten teachers who participated in the Safe Place program; and to the Israeli Trauma Coalition – for without its subsidy this program could not have been carried out.

Thank you all!

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)

2.8 Turning Verbal Interpretations into Experiential Interventions - From Practice to Theory

Submitted for publication.

Abstract

This paper presents ways in which psychological understanding and interpretations can be turned into non-verbal experiments that can expand personal perspectives and open the discourse to transpersonal dimensions. Drawing upon descriptions from a Nature Therapy training program, it will highlight the implementations of this innovative framework, while emphasizing its connection to resilience and psychological health.

Integrating theory with practice, and sharing the therapist's reflexive thoughts, it will provide readers with fresh concepts and ideas that can be incorporated into their own practices.

Key words: Nature Therapy, Nature, Creativity, Resilience, Transpersonal, Group work

Introduction

Over the past several decades, we have witnessed a growing use of non-verbal and experiential methods and approaches in therapy and counseling (Berger 2007; Grainer 1995; Jennings 1992; Lahad 2006; Landy 1996). This process is expressed in the growing use of arts, drama, movement, music and other creative processes as part of therapy, as well as in independent approaches that use the creative and expressive process as their main instrument and diagnostic tool (Jennings, 1998; Johnson 1998; Lahad 2002; Landy, 1996; Rubin, 1984). Drama Therapy uses theater structures as its main framework; it works within a distant and fantastic reality, using role-play, metaphors and creative process as the basis for a non-verbal process (Jennings, 1998; Johnson 1998; Lahad 2002; Landy, 1996). It addresses the creative process as an important therapeutic aim, relating to the imagination as a powerful healing element that can support the client's journey and healing. Despite the development of creative frameworks, theories and methods, that have been developed together with growing practice and research, it seems as if there is yet little literature that explains the psychological rationale that stands behind the construction of such non-verbal and experiential interventions., i.e. the ways in which the therapist relates to his/her psychological understanding and interpretations and utilizes them as the basis for facilitating an investigating laboratory to explore the issue by creative means.

In recent years I have been running and facilitating various Nature Therapy trainings and teaching in body-focused psychotherapy trainings. Each year, after the first two-to-three months, resistance and criticism about the extensive use of non-verbal tools and the limited use of verbal processing emerges. It seems that some of the participants enjoy this kind of work, while others don't see to click with it and even deem it unprofessional. Based upon a case description from a Nature Therapy training program, the article will present a rationale, on which such non-verbal and creative modes of working are based. It will illustrate the way in which the therapist's psychological understandings and interpretations can be used to construct an experiential experiment that allows the client to explore issues in non-verbal ways, via

the brains' right hemisphere. It will first demonstrate a cycle of work that begins with a group warming, continues on to embodied and creative experimentation, and concludes with a gathering and parting ritual. The article is written from a teacher's perspective; one that seeks to help students understand the concepts that stand at the roots of this approach. It will, therefore, relate mainly to terms learned at the Nature Therapy Group Counselors' trainings, stages of group development, and select concepts from Nature Therapy; highlighting their incorporation under an empowering and resilience-oriented facilitation approach.

Being aware of the innovativeness of some of these issues and seeking to provide readers with conceptual ground that will assist them engage with the issue, the article will begin by presenting elements from these frameworks and concepts and then highlighting their implementation in practice. The BASICPH resilience model (Lahad, 2002) was chosen to highlight the importance of inter-modality and interdisciplinary aspects of the presented experiential approach, as well as its relevance to large-scale Nature Therapy work that took place in Israel after the second Lebanon war. Other theories that could have been used to underpin this mode of work, such as Gestalt (Kepner, 1987) or Transpersonal Psychology (Rowan, 2005) will be presented in other contexts.

Nature Therapy: An Innovative Framework

Nature Therapy is an innovative, experiential, therapeutic framework that takes place in nature. It seeks to offer an alternative to the static, constantly controlled environment of therapy (Barkan, 2002; Bleger, 1967) by creating a dynamic therapeutic environment (setting) that is a partner in shaping the process (Berger, 2008; Berger & McLeod, 2006). In this new field, concepts and methods are being developed to create a dynamic and open environment, using nature's healing elements to support therapeutic processes, and discover additional dimensions of practice (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Nature Therapy integrates elements from Art and Drama therapy, Gestalt, the Narrative approach, Ecopsychology, Transpersonal psychology, Adventure Therapy, Shamanism and body–mind practices. The approach is based on the author's personal and professional experience, as well as research designed to conceptualize, analyze, and further develop the field. It has been used with individuals, groups, and families in the private, educational, and health sectors in Israel. Training is provided in several academic institutions in Israel and is also currently being developed in Europe. This article presents some of the concepts and methods of this innovative framework. Due to space limitations, a full presentation of the framework cannot be included. (For an in-depth and detailed description and all case studies, see Berger, 2008).

The BASIC PH (Resilience) Model

Everyone is born with mechanisms that help them successfully cope with complex situations involving pressure and uncertainty. This explains why most people who have undergone difficult or traumatic experiences, such as war, abuse, loss, etc., are able to resume normal functioning and lead a normal life. These abilities are called resiliency (Berger, 2008; Lahad, 2002; Kimhi & Shamai, 2004); a collection of skills that can help people regulate disturbing emotions and adjust their reactions to a new reality (Lahad, 2002). According to The BASIC PH resiliency model developed by

Lahad (2002), there are six languages/channels forming the basis of resiliency: Beliefs, Affect, Social, Imagination, Cognitive and Physical (BASIC PH) are channels that help people cope effectively with stressful situations and lessen the chances of developing post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Lahad, 1992; 2002).

Innovative studies like the one carried out by Kaplansky (2008), emphasize the potential for coping and recovery in employing the BASIC PH channels and the language of imagination, in particular. This channel allows people to create an alternative–preferred reality, which may contain the most effective strategies for coping with stress and the new situation. Lahad's study reveals that each person has a unique coping mechanism, composed of a combination of the BASIC PH languages that are most dominant and accessible to him. The more languages one can speak, the greater his/her abilities to cope with unexpected changes and his/her ability to prevent the development of stress symptoms (Lahad, 2002). According to the BASIC PH resilience model, the task of developing resiliency does not focus on the person's psychological story and/or on a solution for the difficulty or the symptoms, but rather on expanding one's BASICPH coping channels/languages. It stresses the connection to existing strengths and on expanding flexibility, which will contribute to coping with uncertainty and stress. Moreover, work on resiliency may help prevent the evolvement of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Lahad, 2006)!

Modern Life Style Reduces Strength and Coping Abilities

Similar to the BASICPH model that seeks to develop resilience and strength, Nature Therapy wishes to enlarge the languages and channels through which human beings communicate with themselves and their surroundings: landscape, mind, emotion, belief, social skills and imagination (Berger & Lahad, in print). It seems that the development of these channels can meaningfully improve people's general and psychological well-being, widen their life perspectives and ways in which they can shape them, as well as help them cope with crises and difficult situations (Berger, 2008). From an ecopsychological perspective, the fact that people have distanced themselves from nature and from traditional ways life is connected to the reduction of these BASICPH languages. This process is closely linked to the transition to a modern way of life, centered on technological perceptions (Berger, 2008, Berger, 2007; Plotkin, 2003; Roszak, 1995; Rust, 2005, Totton, 2003). This process and the industrial and scientific revolutions that preceded it, changed people's relation to nature, to religion and community and strengthened development of the thinking channel – cognition - leaving less room for experiential channels anchored in the right hemisphere of the brain: the language of emotions, imagination and the body. This trend is expressed nowadays at schools, where most learning is cognitive and linear. It seems that the patterns of our culture do not promote resilience but, on the contrary, limit it. This situation can be seen in common behaviors such as telling a child to stop crying, because "boys don't cry" (reduction of the emotion channel); telling a child who invents stories to stop lying or engaging in flights of fancy or fantasy (the imagination channel); reprimanding a child for moving around in his/her chair; and a child with difficulties in linear thinking to calm down, and/or giving him/her Ritalin (the body channel). These observations may explain the growth of ADHD in children with developed body, imagination and emotional languages who have difficulties in coping with social requirements that involve functioning in a linear mode, and a hard time channeling their encounter with the world to the cognitive channel alone. It

seems that our modern way of life in an individualistic world, in which a large part of interpersonal communication is through internet, cell-phones and SMS messages, explains some of our growing difficulties in inter-personal communication, and individuals' ability to be in touch and be supported by other people (the social channel). This process, together with the development of a shattered, empty self, has taken people further and further away from nature and has led to an increasing search for meaning, contacts and relationship (Berger, 2007; Gergen, 1991; McLeod, 1997; West, 2000). It also explains the spread of phenomena like loneliness, alienation and along with them, depression (Berger, 2007, Berger, Berger & Kellner, 1974, West 2000).

Reconnecting with Nature

Being in nature and encountering it in direct ways, activates all of the person's senses and helps to evoke the childlike parts of the adult (Berger, 2007). Nature can legitimate "taking off one's shoes", meeting, feeling and playing; all allowing more room for right-hemisphere-channel experiences. Nature Therapy invites us to connect with the childlike, awakens forgotten languages, and connects us to intuition and authenticity (Berger, 2007). Embodied Nature Therapy work can connect people to their ecological self (Berger, 2007; Macy, 2005; Seed, 2005) and to the cosmic wisdom that is wider, more ancient and richer than individual or personal knowledge (Berger 2007; Macy 2005). Trans-personal, nature-therapeutic connection can add an additional dimension to the BASICPH channels and enable people to achieve a sense of continuity, belonging and meaning, by being connected to the larger than self; the eternal (Berger, 2007; Rowan 2005).

This paper emphasizes the importance of the experience and the ability of Nature Therapy to develop it. It presents a perspective, according to which therapy focuses on developing personal coping resources, widening people's languages and the ability to give meaning to their lives. This approach presents a belief in peoples' strengths and the ability to heal and cure themselves, using nature to fortify the process. It does not address therapy as a space to solve a specific difficulty or problem. It maintains that the therapists' central role is to enable and provide a safe space for investigation-experience-play, while remaining as a containing witness. According to this approach, the therapists' role in giving meaning will be based on the experience; the body-spirit-soul investigation process, if at all, will emanate from a distance that will enable sinking in, while inviting the person undergoing therapy to come up with his/her own meaning. The above is qualified by a way of working that must be suited and adapted to characteristics, abilities and the developmental stage of the client or group. It is possible that during the first stages of development, until the work method triggers reminiscence of forgotten languages, a lot of guidance and direction will be required from the therapist in organizing interpretation, providing a sense of security and widening perspectives.

Background of the Story

The case in question relates to the seventh meeting of a bi-annual program for training group counselors in Nature Therapy, held at T.L.M. in 2007. The first year of the program focused on theories and intervention techniques relating to group work,

as well as theories and methods from Nature Therapy. The second year was dedicated mainly to supervision supporting student's practicum experiences.

At the fifth meeting, several students confronted Dafna Tassa, who teaches the theoretical unit on group work. They claimed that the parallel Nature Therapy unit (which is mainly experiential) was not sufficiently elaborated and explained. Some said they felt confused, even inundated, by the experiences in the workshops, they don't quite understand the facilitator's way of working and how they could apply it in practice. In the first session of the sixth meeting (held indoors for about two hours), this resistance was reiterated in front of me, the training manager and Nature Therapy teacher. In ensuing discussions, it became apparent that for some participants the experiential, body-spirit-soul methods we used were new and unfamiliar, thus causing apprehension. Some participants, who have experienced individual and/or group mainstream Psychotherapy, felt that the lack of verbal elaboration and/or processing left them confused, feeling that the matter has not been closed. During the discussion, it became clear that in addition to resistance connected with psychodynamic processes and stages of group development, projection and resistance was connected to transition processes in the group's separation stages (Ruttan & Stone, 2004; Rosenwasser, 1997; MacKenzie, 1979; MacKenzie & Livesly, 1983). In addition, it may have been connected to encountering new work modules and the use of a new language. It seemed that the anxiety and confusion characteristic of transition in process and of individual segregation stages, were expressed in the chaos of spontaneous story making, invented and told in the circle under my facilitation. Nevertheless, it seemed that the story held and maintained itself; moving evenly between various poles: creation and destruction, hope and despair, order and chaos. Further on, along with the parallel observed between the chaos of the invented story, the anger and aggression that emerged in the verbal discussion, together with my remark to "trust the process", sharpened the differences between participants themselves and between the different facilitators. Dafna presented the classic, verbal, cognitive and psychodynamic work approach, while I presented Nature Therapy, namely experiential, narrative work, anchored in the body and the imagination. I felt frustrated, since we were working in a small space. There was no room to channel tensions and aggressions into dramatic body activities through role-play and physical experiences that allow for conflict emergence and resolution. The frustration stemmed from my difficulty to contain the aggression, and my feeling that I wasn't filling my professional duty adequately, namely - showing participants how to support the segregation process and diffuse tensions by play and experiential means (in contrast to verbal approaches). It was raining; in the prevailing insecurity it was obviously inappropriate to suggest that the group should work outdoors. I stopped the dialogue and shared my feelings with the group. I reflected back the feelings of anxiety and lack of trust and tried to normalize them by placing the group and the process in relation to the initial stages of what was to be a two-year program. Trying to evoke a passage to the right brain lobe, I used the metaphor of a ship that left had the quay and started to move away: passengers can still see it moving away; to return would be complex, even impossible; the ship's destination, the ports on its route, the vagaries of the weather and its destination still seem unclear...

The metaphor seemed to normalize most anxieties and calm spirits. After a silence, during which participants seemed to digest the story, I asked them to continue with the planned subject, namely learning the technique of "the story that has to be heard now" (Lahad, 2005). Reut (not her real name) asked to say something,

otherwise she would be frustrated. I asked her to stop, contain the feeling, give it room in her body and observe the movement of the feeling during the day. To support the transition to working with the story, I asked every participant to take twenty minutes with another participant, and use the time for conversation and mutual ventilation. After the intermission, a participant volunteered to demonstrate the technique. A story had come up (spontaneously invented according to a certain technique) about a loss she had experienced, its meaning and how she had grown from it. Other participants echoed parallel stories and the meeting ended in a spontaneous ceremony, standing together in a circle in the middle of the room, feeling fraternity, respect and identification. Working with an individual who told her story and the echoes of additional stories that had subsequently reverberated in the room, enabled the group to move through individuation and experience, if only for a moment, the intimacy that a group can contain. The work with the story demonstrated how the group could move between stages of development via work based on creative processes in the right brain-lobe. While the issue of what is elaboration and the tension between Dafna's work and my own were not entirely resolved, it seemed that the group had internalized something and calmed down; at least on levels of experience and physical expression.

There is a white sail on the horizon after all...

One week after the seventh meeting. After a four-hour morning session in class with Dafna, we met on the beach at one o'clock. It was a nice, clear day; people were sitting in coffee shops and children were playing. The group gathered; we moved southward to a space empty of people, with a wilder, more heterogeneous, landscape: rocks, table fences (rock slabs on the water line), bays on the sea-side, limestone slopes and hotels on the other side.

I invited the group to join in a circle for the usual opening ceremony: holding hands (holding and being held) leaning on each other, listening inwardly and outwardly, to nature as well as to each other. I asked each participant to find the movement that would support him/her now, perform it for the group, teaching them and then doing it together. The group procrastinated. When one finished, it took time for another one to take the lead (there was no flow). Members used structured movements from Yoga, Tai Chi, etc., not their own, authentic movements. It seemed that the decision which movement to choose came from prior information or a previous repertoire of movements, totally ignoring the "here and now" - feelings, influences of the sand, landscape, wind, and the interpersonal and group encounter. I stopped the exercise and shared my feelings. I told the group that this kind of movement could stem from the fact that in prior warming sessions we had engaged in a lot of martial arts exercises, forming a habit or an image that this was the right way. I also mentioned that their choice of movement could stem from a pattern that continues the structured, cognitive, learning processes practiced in the prior session, which had been held indoors. Glancing over at two children and their father playing not too far away on the sand, I offered a short explanation on the importance of connecting to the childlike, the authentic and the important discoveries these might bring up. I complied with some participants' requests and shared the rationale behind my interventions and the considerations that made me stop the activity and offer a new one: to go around the circle, imitating and sharing empowering faces. I asked them to introduce childishness, to enable group participants to bring up a-symmetrical, ugly or unusual sides, less seen in daily situations. I explained the importance of connecting to

forgotten languages: that of imagination, the body and emotion. The game developed further when we added voice to the faces and it turned into short, dramatic role-plays, passed around the circle. Participants serving as both actors and witnesses (audience) is an enabling process. Within the limitations and the protection of the circle and the rules of the game, they could express situations hitherto unseen in the group: courting-courted; traitor-betrayed; child-mother; masculine-feminine; beautiful-ugly; strong and weak... When it seemed that the participants had caught on to the spirit of the game and exposed their embarrassing sides as well, I invited everybody to sit and start narrative and imaginative work: the group invents a story and up to three participants present their interpretations of it within the circle, playing and creating in the sand. As different stories were told, with or without logical sequence, those who entered the circle enabled themselves to experience and express additional interactions such as competitiveness, offense, aggression and loneliness. After about twenty minutes, when one of the participants who had stayed for a relatively long time in the circle left, silence ensued. The circle remained empty. It seemed that witnessing stories, different ways of expression, listening to conflicts and their resolution among friends in the circle, through differentiation to separation and individuation, had ushered the group into a new place. By stopping to observe the marks left in the sand in the circle, the group wanted to digest what had happened and ask questions about where and how to continue; what would happen if someone would now enter the empty circle? What does it mean to be so visible at high noon, in the center of the circle? Dan (false name), who had never been in the center and whose voice had scarcely been heard till then, moved into the circle. Quietly and slowly, he started playing in the sand, expressing a kind of masculinity different from the energetic, exaggerated and maybe aggressive one he had displayed before. Like a man – child – boy – against the background of the story invented by participants, he stayed at the center of the circle, painting and playing in the sand. After a few minutes, I invited him to add voice or text. This led to him say "confusion accompanied by belief in the right way". I asked him to stop, observe the form created in the sand and ask someone to join him. Yarden (false name) joined Dan, placed her hand on him and accompanied him as he strode with closed eyes on the path he had created in the sand, repeating like a mantra "confusion accompanied by belief in the right way". As he walked the text changed: "livluf, bilbul, livluf"... (Hebrew words for blooming, confusion, blooming). The group remained silent – observing and listening. I stopped Dan in the middle of the circle, the middle of his path. I asked him to close his eyes, listen to the murmur of waves, the movement of wind. Like covering a seed, I covered his legs with sand and asked him to stay like this for a moment and tell us what blooms or what is the wish? After a minute he says "to find love around the corner". I asked Dan to open his eyes and look. On the horizon - a boat floated with white open was sailing in a calm blue sea... I cherished the wonder of unity between the personal story and the situation provided by nature and thought about the magic of the three-way relationship: client-therapist-nature (Berger, 2005, Berger & McLeod, 2006). I stood behind Dan, embraced him and sang: "a white sail in the horizon still faces the heavy black cloud, all that we ask let it be..." (a well known Israeli song- prayer). Maayan (false name) joined in, the group followed... a moment of intimacy, even holiness...

Dan left the center of the circle and sat down. I asked all those who want to find love around the corner to lift their hands. A moment of embarrassment ensued. I echo it: "yes, it is embarrassing, but anyone ready to be seen in their embarrassment is invited to enter the circle". Six people lifted their hands: three men and three women,

the bachelors in the group. It was nice to see how at this stage, people who were preoccupied with their place in the group, were liked and accepted - another theme that had emerging via the game in the sand.

I asked participants to dig a hole – afterwards nicknamed the hole of wishes. All participants dug and created energetically; each created his/her own individual hole and a common creation. They differed from each other, but the sand connected them. While I was digging, I asked: "what should I do, build or change in order to bring love about the corner?" It seemed like the digging could go on for hours. I stopped and asked each person separately: What did you find? Niv, pointing to a big rock he discovered in the hole, said that he had exposed the fear... "Now I'm trying to get it out". Niv said he discovered that his real fear is to marry the wrong woman. "I don't know what is more frightening - to be left alone or be stuck with the wrong person..." After this round, I asked another question: "what are you prepared to do for love around the corner to arrive?" As he struggled with the rock, Niv said "cope with the fear, expose it; take it out". With an effort, he drew out the rock and threw it backwards. Niv and the group breathed with relief. After a minute, he found another, bigger rock, planted in the hole and helped get it out. Ofer, who earlier in the story circle played his younger brother, fought and battled with him, offered his help. The rock is too big; it is possible only to expose it, look at it...

The cooperative round continued: Mika said she was ready to put in her vulnerability; she placed a round stone in the hole, signifying her softness. She threw her pain and disillusion from prior loves into the hole; expanding its use from a space, in which to plant wish seeds, to a grave in which painful experiences and memories could be buried. In the background, the murmur of the waves coming and going symbolized the cycles of life, the ebb and tide, birth and death, despair and hope. Participants from the outer circle, older women who live with mates joined in; planting or burying stories of their own. There is a sense of unity, each one with a personal story and everybody with a basic wish and need for love. The ceremony ended when I asked each participant to part from the place, to leave the group and find a personal space on the beach, stay there and write a letter. The letter could be written on paper, or alternatively, written, painted or sculpted on the sand; exposed to the group, to me or to God.

Facing the sea, we discovered feelings of commonality through playing together in the sand, sharing love stories, intimate group contact and the possibilities of the personal intimacy involved when a man or woman faces him/herself.

The group dispersed. Intimacy dissolved into separation towards parting. Reut lay down on the fence, dipping her hands in the sea. Ayala walked a bit and sat down about a kilometer away from the group. Meyrav remained near the display space and wrote in her journal. About half an hour later they all came back and gathered around in a new, last circle on the beach. The time was half past three; the sun was moving towards the sea. The group was also moving towards the moment of closing and parting. They sat in silence. People were grateful for the experience but chose not to share their feelings. Exposure had changed to introspection, sharing to personal reflection. That was the situation minutes before folding up and parting (Rosenwasser, 1997). I said something about working in the inter-model method, in which transition from one medium to another can promote the process and expand the perspective of the research topic and the story. Transition from movement to play, story and creating

in sand, and transition from work focusing on the whole group, on sub-groups and individuals and back to the whole group, in the here and now. The group, like nature and the setting sun, are points to which one can relate.

Zilla asked how these bonds had been created. How had we made the transition from a situation in which people were ashamed of passing on a movement in a circle a few hours ago, to a common story about searching for love around the corner and the current state of intimacy? I explained that this is part of the power of a group playing together in general and of play-work in the sand; it reaches the subconscious, the archetypal and universal truths common to all. It is a model that expands the Jungian model of playing in the sandbox (Menukhin, 1993) into one that takes place in nature's own open sandbox, on the sea-shore, the cosmic sandbox (Berger, 2007).

Four o'clock. We part. A few white sails float on the background of the setting sun; our prints in the sand await the tide...

Intimacy, the tree and me...

On the morning of the eighth meeting, a full day in nature is devoted to the purpose of opening a window to body-oriented ways of doing Nature Therapy. We met at the park near the college, where the theory is being studied. At the initial sharing meeting, questions emerged about the group's ability to listen and the various needs and characteristics of its members. It seemed that the group was ready to move immediately to the segregation and individuation stage, prepared for exposure and more intimate contact. I based the group warm-up on this conversation about listening; focused on listening to the voices of nature – outside the body and inside it. After this, I asked the group to listen to one single sound (a vehicle, a chirping bird, the whistle of the wind in a tree) that, while listening, changes to another sound. Subsequently, listening should be allowed to widen into listening to several voices simultaneously and letting the whole ensemble play together, outside and within the body. In the sharing conversation that followed an hour's play in couples, during which one participant plays and investigates in natural space with his/her eyes closed, accompanied by another participant with open eyes, Ella said: "When I accompanied Ofra I didn't understand the issue, but as soon as I covered my eyes, I understood. It was amazing; my familiar fears immediately appeared: the fear of being supported, of closing my eyes, of being led. I decided to continue; after a minute a strange thing happened: I could see the trees with my eyes closed... I thought I would be afraid, but I wasn't; I went straight into the woods. There was a tree there, large and illuminated, that called me. I placed my hand on it and felt as if it was chained by force with an iron chain. With eyes closed, I let my hands lead me without thinking, wanting to untie the suffocation. When I relieved the knot, I burst into tears, hugged the tree, and hugged my accompanying mate. All of a sudden it all made sense, the asthma, the years of suffocation...now, for the first time in years, I can see the child in me, free, doing as she pleases..." In the elaboration meeting that took place afterwards indoors, to link the activity, the BASICPH model and the potential of Nature Therapy for development and empowerment, Ella shared: "As a child I used to see lights like the ones on the tree I saw last week, but as the years passed, and I became sensitive to adult reactions, I silenced this ability until it seemed to have disappeared. It is quite frightening, at least strange, to once again see this ability and the connection between things".

For me, as an observer, it pointed to Ella's readiness to expose a personal story, an unusual, somewhat spiritual ability, as well as the group's ripeness and ability to make room for such different stories. Were we once again touching the same intimacy? What was the meaning of the tree and the spiritual elements that had been introduced into a group studying Nature Therapy? Is it possible, in general, to expand languages so quickly, and languages connected to nature, in particular? In an attempt to create a universal feeling, I asked participants to read about the Council of all Beings model created by Buddhist eco-psychologist Joanna Missy. She had been asked to expand the ecological self of the people she worked with and ease their experience of loss through an encounter with landscape, fauna and flora. Why had it been so important for me to create this wider context? What was its meaning at this particular time?

At the end of the day, towards sunset

This paper has presented an experiential method with which Nature Therapy group work can be facilitated. It described three workshops that highlighted the way in which the facilitator can turn his/her psychological understanding into an (improvised) experiment that will explore the issue in non-verbal ways, while expanding perspectives and patterns. It emphasized the contribution of this approach to the development of BASICPH languages and to the person's resilience and strength. The article challenged some mainstream therapeutic concepts, by presenting ways in which therapy/group work can take place in nature; relating to nature as a partner in the process. It emphasized the importance of creativity and spontaneity in therapy while demonstrating ways in which the embodied connection with nature can widen the discourse to include metaphysical and transpersonal dimensions.

Working with such experiential (and regressive) tools does not exempt us from the need to know and understand group theory. Rather, expanding observation, of group processes to perspectives that also contain the development of communication channels, can help understand various processes of resistance. In experiential groups, resistance has the usual psychodynamic basis, added to an entry into forgotten languages, which can be as frightening and difficult as accepting the counselor's authority, connecting to others and/or belonging to a group. Though creative experiential work is on the rise in the world, it seems that very little literature exists as yet in this area, which would explain the importance of such research. I hope this paper, written in a simple narrative style, will motivate more people to join in and further expand research literature on the topic.

(For references see: Chapter 9 References in Ph.D. thesis)